

# WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WWW.THEWIRE.CO.UK ISSUE 261 NOVEMBER 2005 £3.80



## Remake Remodel

60 cover versions that rattle the state of song



Steve Reich Earth Rolf Julius  
The birth of Japanese free music

Oren Marshall Mazen Kerbaj  
Jackson And His Computer Band

nine | horses



nine | horses | David Sylvian, Steve Jingles, Baum Friedman

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Often read as a sign of creative bankruptcy, cover versions are also the site of some of music's most radical experiments with existing songforms. In a 12 page special, *The Wire's* crack writing squad picks 80 cover versions that rattle the state of song. Plus: writer/musician Alan Light goes undercover to explore his motivations for versioning Moonridge, Minutemen, Captain Beefheart and more

# The Masthead

There's been much debate round here as to just who (and what) we were looking for to put in our cover versions special. Spirited performance alone wasn't enough to swing an admittance to our club (sorry, PJ Harvey, even though your version of "Is That All There Is?" is splendidly dour), and neither was sheer mischievous (dito Scousie And The Banshees' less than reverent version of "The Lord's Prayer"). What we did look for was music with a kind of longevity, strong enough and pliable enough to be reinvented, reinterpreted and rewritten. No less a person than Steve Reich, who is our guest in this month's invisible jukebox feature, says as much. Reich, whose own music has been enthusiastically taken to the heart (in both senses) of generations of DJs, club remixers and samplers, does it himself. One section of his latest recording, *Variations* (Nouvel), contains quotes from the centuries' old "L'homme Arabe". So popular was this secular tune, it was incorporated into music for masses by Dufay, Palestrina and probably several composers as well. A cynic might say that these adaptations were the sign of a pragmatic streak in the church's policy in relation to playlists; but it's probably more accurate to say that clerics and composers alike simply had an ear for a good tune.

Strictly speaking, variations and samplings are probably parts of a thing, whereas a cover is a new entity. All three can be motivated by a desire to pay homage, although the motivations – as Alan Licht notes in his introduction to our main feature – can be myriad. A good cover is not only one that lives. In its own right, it's a piece that becomes something else by dint of its new interpretation and the circumstances surrounding its changed environment. To take a bizarre example, you could look at Florence Foster Jenkins's wildly wayward interpretations of operatic greats, Bankrolled by a rich husband, she hired various venues – even New York's Carnegie Hall – during the interwar years for a series of concerts unrestrained by any limits to imagination and illuminated with a self-delight of grandiose proportions. Jenkins was so popular that opera critics fought to get tickets; to hear her rendition of "Bless Us" by Pavlovich is to see her dragged across the snowy Russian steppes, loosened dentures chattering in the cold. Small wonder that Pavlovich's legacy has dimmed while Fortune's shines on glorious perpetuity.

The serious point of this is that the continual remaking process so central to the cover version is bound up with the infinite possibilities that its

performance offers. And by performance, I don't mean the formal framing provided by the concert platform, but rather the kind of presentation to the world that has a more diffuse focus. As philosopher Judith Butler has written, the very act of daily performance is bound inextricably to theories of gender, sexuality and politics. Extend this thinking to performers who knowingly perform, and a rich, mutable complexity comes into play. Nick Cave's piano and voice cover of his own song, "Sad Winters" – so far available only on his (mostly spoken word) CD *The Secret Life Of The Love Song* – is a world away from the blasting original contained on *Your Funeral, My Trial*. The emotional emphasis has shifted; whatever rage the first version tapped into, the second one is a vision of loss. It's the shadow of the object that has fallen upon the ego, to purify Freud's definition of melancholia.

And lastly, seeing as I'm a cover myself, let's turn to The Wire's temporarily otherwise engaged Deputy Editor, Anne Hilde Neset, and our Editor-at-Large, Rob Young, to whom congratulations are due on the arrival of Axel Vinyl Neset Young. He is a new release guaranteed to make as much noise as any of the musicians featured in this issue of The Wire.

LOUISE GRAY

# WIRE

## Adventures In Modern Music

Issue 261 November 2005

\$3.80

ISSN 0952-0680 (USPS 006231)

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The Wire is published 12 times a year by The Wire (Business Ltd). Printed by Bell & Bain. Printed in the UK on 100% recycled paper. ISSN 0952-0680 (USPS 006231). The Wire (052-2005-0014) (052-0012) is a £3.80. Periodicals postage paid at White Plains, NY and at U.S. postage points and at Woodstock, NY. Postage paid at Montreal, Quebec, Canada Post, 100 Avenue du Canada, PO Box 8100, Montreal, Quebec H3C 2H6. Postage paid at 100 Avenue du Canada, PO Box 8100, Montreal, Quebec, Canada Post, H3C 2H6. Please send all correspondence to The Wire, 23 Jack's Place, London E1 6NN, UK. The Wire does not accept any address changes.

The Wire is funded by £1.72 by Anthony Wood. Expenses 140-150000. It costs part of a million to print and publish the magazine. The Wire is a not-for-profit publication, supported by the donations it receives. It continues to publish in a 100% print environment, despite a 100% digital presence.

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**Images** Amy & Tanweer, Frank Bauer, Kaween Black, Chris Buck, Thomas Bauer, Mattias Ek, Robert Gallagher, City Howitt, John Hooper, Simon Leigh, Sebastian Mayes, Duncan O'Neill, Savage Pencil, Anna Schon, Jon Talaga, Jo Ann Toy, Eva Vermandel, Johnny Volcano, Jake Walters, Kelso Yoshida

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**RAF 2005**  
£10.80  
£10.80  
USA & Canada US\$19.95/£9.95  
Rest of the World £25/£16.95/US\$26

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# Subscriber special

With this month's issue, all *The Wire*'s subscribers will receive a free copy of *Exploratory Music From Portugal 05*



Compiled to coincide with this year's Atlantic Waves festival of new Portuguese music, which takes place in London between 22-30 November, *Exploratory Music From Portugal 05* collects tracks by some of that country's most adventurous musicians, including Rafael Toral, Manuel Mota, Sei Miguel and Ana Da Silva. As with the festival, the CD showcases a wide spectrum of musical approaches, from new takes on Portuguese folkforms to electronica, free improvisation, avant rock and beyond. The CD is a given away free to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of this month's issue. For more information on the Atlantic Waves festival go to [www.atlanticwaves.org.uk](http://www.atlanticwaves.org.uk)

*Exploratory Music From Portugal 05* is the latest instalment in an ongoing series of CDs that are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on a copy of the CD by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month.

**For details of how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 104 of this month's issue or go to [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)**



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## UnAmerican activities

I would not wish Morgan Craft's *et de ocurr*, "Towards A New Consciousness" (Letters, *The Wire* 260), to disappear into its own echoes, as it seems to merit a response. Initially, I thought Craft was castigating *The Wire* for not featuring enough new young African-American avant garde artists, of living in a nostalgic, new jazz comfort zone. Then I realised that Craft is, in fact, surveying the contemporary African-American avant garde landscape and discovering, to his dismay, that it is practically depopulated. Hellooo? Anyone there?

Why is this? Systematic racism? Perhaps, though given the relative ease with which music can be made and disseminated nowadays, I'm not sure this is a relevant factor. There may be more subtle reasons for the current dearth. The vehicles presently available are either too academic (jazz), too staged out (outside of a handful of the usual suspects), the Black Rock Coalition never really mustered much enthusiasm), or played out. Hip hop and R&B are global in their outreach but so corporate and compromised, so in denial of, and disconnected from, the conditions in which many African-Americans live as to be anathema to anyone of good faith and serious creative intentions.

I wish Craft well in his quest for a "new consciousness". I hope there is latent activity which his shout-out might bring to the surface. However, I'm galled at his assumption that it is vital that America, "still impressive in its scope, scale, confidence and arrogance", must be the cradle of any new musical activity. The solipsistic tendency of "Americans" (as, interestingly, they always call themselves as opposed, to, I guess, "people") has, it seems, across the cultural spectrum, even unto the avant garde, America über alles. New World or otherwise.

Here's a thought: why has it always got to be American? Suppose the cultural domination of America, a runious, warlike country which has traditionally asserted itself by bombing and, more significantly, consuming the rest of the world out of house and home, was something we could do without for a while? Suppose we do attend instead to the new musical voices emanating from Europe (including the UK Crime scene), the Middle East, the Far East, Australasia? Suppose America, black and white, instead of giving voice the whole damn time, showed a little humility and learned to put a cap up against its walls of cultural ignorance and listen?

Patrick Jameson via email

## Secretly Canadian

Congratulations to Rob Young on his Boards Of Canada feature (*The Wire* 260). I had always imagined this secretiveness due to be a bit too coy by half, chucking up their sleeves at the meanings read into the obscure vagueness of their electronica by their rather sad legion of internet devotees, their "silence" a cover for mirthlessness or simply having nothing to say for themselves. How far is that from the case. Particularly impressive, to me, was Mike Sandison's analysis of the "descending chord" scene in Stevie Wonder's "Living For The City": "I recognise something there where it feels like he's trying to translate into music something that is otherworldly, that's not about the mundane..." I'd always felt something similar but never expected to have it (semi-) articulated for me by a Board Of Canada, of all people.

Steve Kampmeier, Edinburgh, UK

## Silence is golden

In the early to mid-70s, I spent a lot of time listening to The Spontaneous Music Ensemble duo of John Stevens and Trevor Watts, who were then often getting into areas subsequently occupied by the New London Silence (pace *The Wire* 260). A published example of this can be found in part of "Corso" on *Quintessence 2* (Emanem CD), while Paul Rutherford can be heard doing something similar during "Desire Senoi" on The Gentle Hand Of The Bourgeoisie (Emanem CD). Stevens also devised slow moving or static compositions, most notably the "Sustained Piece", which can be heard performed by a large group on *Mountpiece* (Emanem CD), as well as during several SME small group performances elsewhere.

Meanwhile, AMM were incorporating long actual silences in their performances, as can be heard on *To Hear And Back Again* (Matchless CD). (Incidentally, Radu Malfatti was then a rumblous trombone player on the London scene.) Stevens and Watts also went through a very austere period in 1972-3, when they limited their SME performances to a different kind of reductionism, just playing sparse staccato notes. So the New London Silence is very déjà vu to me.

One difference between then and now is that the recent austere orthodoxy has gone on so long that it has become the emperor's new music - a frustrating vista of previously talented improvisers doing very little. I am glad that people are now coming out of this

restricted subminimal area. The results I've heard so far point to some fine music ahead, just as it did when Stevens and Watts emerged from their hyper-austere. On another subject, regarding the review of John Stevens' "New Cool Jazz & Improv", *The Wire* 260, please note that Stevens was using his full size jazz kit on this jazz date, not his "tiny kit".

Martin Davidson Emanem, London, UK

## Single-celled organisms

Having read the Ephiphany (*The Wire* 259), I admire Philip Shergben for his psychological strength at getting rid of half his record collection. However, I am quite surprised he did not ask Amoeba to bugger off when they charged him \$2.99 for a record by El General, especially after such an emotional amputation from him. Was that not mean? Philip, if I had known, I would have burnt it for you free of charge! These Amoeba people, do they really suck that much?

David Rengel Toulouse, France

## Cassette pet peeve

You lot are always banging on about Techno-futurism and the like, so why are you always giving an enthusiastic platform to the likes of Sven Legg? ("The Persistence Of Memory", Letters, *The Wire* 260) and his smelly cardboard boxful of cassettes? What is this snobbishly retrograde, après garde attitude to new technology? Cassettes were God's way of telling us to hurry up and invent the iPod. They were rubbish, they tangled, they snapped, they were ugly and messy, and more often than not, the first 15 minutes of a cassette side would fail to play properly before "twisting" to full volume. And would that I could have back the accumulated minutes I spent waiting for them to rewind. This was not a medium to be trusted, but to heave into the skip once something better arrived. Ironically, no doubt when cassettes were invented, someone like Mr Legg would have been piping up about how he'd stick with his "real" collection of sheet music, thank you very much.

Robert Milne via email □

## Corrections

Issue 260 We made two errors regarding Birchville Cat Motel. On the cover, they were mistakenly listed as Birchfield Cat Motel, while on the contents page we dropped the 'K' from Campbell Kneale. Apologies.

# The Joined-up World of *The Wire*

*The Wire* 262: on sale from  
17 November

All copies of next month's December issue will come with a free CD, *The Wire* Tapper 14. See page 109 for details

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[www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk) is *The Wire*'s official Web presence. New items on site this month include audio streams from the cover versions special, the unedited transcript of Edwin Pouncey's Earth interview, an audio extract from Steve Reich's Invisible Jukebox, video footage from Norway's Nymuse Festival, and more. Sign up to The Conduit at [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk) for our fortnightly newsletter containing regular web updates

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# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Pg 1 top: *Entzückende Neubauten* sweep it off (left) and *Zoea Parkins* strings it up



**Karlheinz Stockhausen** will open the International Freeze Art Fair on 21 October in London. He will deliver a lecture entitled "Composer And Interpreter", which will be fleshed out by musical examples provided by American bassett horn player Suzanne Stephens and Dutch alto flautist Kathinka Pasveer. The following evening, Stockhausen will give another concert of his electronic works at the Old Billingsgate Market, reminiscent of his appearance at London's The Barbican in 2003. He will "perform", if that's the word, *Kontakte* and *Octophony*, the latter of which in particular is dependent on "correct loudspeaker distribution" for maximum impact. Tickets are available either by telephone (00 44 870 890 9514) or at [www.eventickets.com](http://www.eventickets.com) >> **mono.kultur** is a new magazine from Berlin, which deals with figures from across the media – film, literature, music, image, even architecture and fashion. The publication takes pride in being undistracted by adverts and supplementary titbits. In order to do justice to its subjects, it features just the one interview (in English) per issue. September 2005's edition, for example, is devoted solely to founder member of Raster-Noton Christian Nicolai. That said, *mono.kultur* isn't too heavy, with a strong emphasis on visual content – and in the Nicolai interview, there is even interaction between the visuals and the text, as the interviewer presents him with images of a weaving pattern for automated looms and a screen shot from Nicolai's desktop for comparison. *mono.kultur* will appear ten times per year. [www.monokultur.com](http://www.monokultur.com) >> French avant-trumpet legend **Jac Berrocal** teams up with Brooklyn-based Japanese cassette master **Aki Onida** and violinist and Wire contributor **Dan Warburton** for a string of rare European dates this month; shows include Tours, France (Total Meeting, 12 November, with Alexandre Bellenger); Paris (Point Ephémère, 17, with JP Pevsner); Stockholm, Sweden (Fylkingen, 18); Norrköping, Sweden (Annan Musik, 19); Geneva, Switzerland (12 Cave, 24) and Nantes, France (28). Further details available at [www.parisintransatlantic.com](http://www.parisintransatlantic.com) >>

December sees the DVD release of *Lebenskeder*, the documentary about *Entzückende Neubauten* first released in 1993. Commissioned, in one of countless examples of the German sense of humour by WDR-TV's architecture division, it tells the story of the group's extraordinary beginnings, when Etika Bargeld and NH Umlaut created music by hitting themselves against the metal walls of an autobahn flyover. Thereafter, it tracks their development as they collapsed boundaries, not just physically, such as when they drilled through the floor of the London ICA, but also the theoretical boundaries between music, performance and visual art. As a bonus, the DVD will also include footage from a 1993 tour as well as their first ever video clips, "Intern" and "Blume" >> This month sees the publication of *Warp* by Black Dog. A collection of essays, unseen photos, documents and artifacts relating to the rise of the Sheffield label, home to Boards Of Canada, Autodrive, Prefuse 73 and Squarepusher among others. Warp's independence has been preserved by their adept handling of new technologies and sensitivity towards the creative autonomy of their artists. Authors are The Who's own Rob Young and art director/writer Adrian Shaughnessy. *Warp* is the first of a series of publications, entitled *Labels Unlimited*, which will profile similarly independent labels whose identity has helped shape the music they release >> There's a significant musical component to this year's Performa festival, devoted to new visual art performance, which begins on 3 November in New York City. The launch night will see the premiere of Danish Artist **Jesper Just**'s new multimedia work *Opera In New York*, which will feature The Finnish Shouting Man's Choir and a moving image musical score devised by Christian Marclay. On 15 November, **David Grubbs** collaborates with poet **Susan Howe** on a performance work based on two of Howe's poems, while during December **Zoea Parkins** provides the score for choreographer John Jasperse's new work, *Prone*. [www.thekitchen.org](http://www.thekitchen.org) >> **Table Of The Elements** have announced details

of their showcase event on 15-16 March 2006 in Austin Texas, which goes by the title of Festival No 3/ SXSW Showcase: Dubnium. The event will feature the first appearance in 20 years of **Rhys Chatham** and his nine piece *Guitar Army*, which features Emre Bozok of The Modern Lovers and ex-Swan drummer Jonathan Rane, Berlin's Arnold Dreyblatt and his *Orchestra Of Exotic Strings*, as well as Tony Conrad, Zeena Parkins and San Augustin >> There's been something of a shake-up in the Autumn schedule of *Resonance FM*. Put out to temporary pasture are *Scratching The Surface* and *The Diggers*, hosted by The Win's **Mike Barnes** and **Edwin Pouncey/Savage Pen** respectively. However, Edwin will return as co-host of a monthly Black Metal programme on *Resonance* on Friday nights at 10:30pm, in which those with a predilection for Satanic goats and the like will doubtless be serially sated >> Stories that have recently done the rounds concerning **Mark E Smith** are to be taken with a pinch of salt. Following earlier rumours that he was a maid to Christopher Eccleston for the role of Dr Who comes another report that he has been asked to read the football results on BBC1's *Final Score* programme on 17 November. More bona fide, however, is The Fall's *Garden Mix* Broadcast on *Shane* Quentin's *Garden Of Earthly Delights* shown on *Central Radio Milton Keynes* in August, it was originally a common or garden compilation of recent Fall tracks. However, Paul Wilson has added a new twist on the concept of "cover versions". He's scanned in a selection of Fall CD covers, converted those scanned images into sound, then subjected that sound to further manipulation. The results can be found online at [www.n-a-space.net/sound/fal\\_cd\\_covers.html](http://www.n-a-space.net/sound/fal_cd_covers.html) >> **Sunn O)))**'s **Stephen O'Malley** is collaborating with the artist Banksy *Violette* as the sound/wave designer on a new piece entitled *On Black Wings/Six Chorale Bleed*, which will be exhibited from 17 November onwards at the Galerie Rodolphe Janssen in Brussels and follows a previous collaboration together, *Bleed*, which showed at New York's *Barbara Gladstone Gallery* during the Summer. □



# JACKSON AND HIS COMPUTER BAND

## By David Stubbs

### Smash it up



Glam nerd: Jackson Fourgeaud

"For me, this is a very personal and egomaniacal record," says Paris-based 26 year old Jackson Fourgeaud of his Warp debut album *Smash*, which reduces Techno to new extremes of disintegration. "When Techno started, it was supposed to be about the tribal, collective culture gone global, as well as about establishing a constant flow in the music. My album is exactly the opposite of that. Not only is it about personal expression, but it's about rupture, conflict, the danger and brutal aspect of things. Even having my face on the cover is breaking a taboo. I didn't want this just to be another record with graphics on the cover, avoiding the personal, I'm happy to portray myself as the 'glam nerd'."

*Smash*, the most violently emphatic, ambitious and "warts and all" finest Techno album of 2005, is the latest in a historical series of records which revitalise electronic music by defying its linear, 4/4 conventions. Although you can trace high, sweeping arcs of pop progression amidst the chaos, at surface level, *Smash* consists of roulette upon roulette of fragmented detritus of dismantled or abandoned genres, pulverised by heavy, if irregular rhythms. With every beat comes another accretion of sonic shards, each a little shock to the system, like treading on something metal and unexpected.

Fourgeaud first became interested in making music in his mid-teens, when he found himself intrigued by the studio sound equipment used by his mother, the folk and blues singer Paula Moore. He was particularly drawn to state of the art dance music because he found it a relief to stumble on a genre that confounded and annoyed his hip, Hendrix and Pink Floyd-loving parents. A brief stint as a model in his late teens earned him the wherewithal to purchase the necessary instruments.

*Smash* was assembled over four long years of laying down tracks at home and in Parisian studios, of

editing, processing and reprocessing. Its elaborately woven patchwork fabric draws on memory flashes of ancient funk and disco, glam, pop, PlayStation and contemporary electronica. At times, it's like listening to ten Daft Punk albums at once – there's so much more going on here than in some of the cuter, popper French House of recent years, which Fourgeaud describes as "developing a brand or a logo, then creating the music to fit that logo". *Smash*, by contrast, flourished as a result of its creator having had no notion where he was going or what he was doing, even as he was creating it.

"All I knew was that I wanted to make something that answered to a feeling in the pit of my stomach," he says. "I tried so many approaches in order to do this that what I had in the end was an accumulation of studies, of different pernicious approaches, for example. In the end, I realised that this accumulation in itself was taking a sort of organic quality, where even the failures were as important as the successes. So I decided to retain that. In the end, I felt it was not so much making songs as chipping at a sculpture, using digital tools."

This reference to the plastic arts is typical – he has alluded to his work as "antique futurist". Moreover, despite drawing for its subject matter on the American music Fourgeaud absorbed during stints in the US at summer camps when he was the only non-English speaking child, his music is a contemporary echo of ideas in the air in early 20th century European art. There's a brutalist similitude about tracks like "Rock On" and the cabaret Glam stone of "Teen Beat Queen", with their starkly contrasting layers and exquisite points of difference, while Fourgeaud has referred to the "constantly chopped up audiovisual environment we're exposed to" as an inspiration. Moreover, it denies easy conventional consumption – like Autchette's later work, its multi-dimensionality and

shapeshifting mean it has to be regarded, rather than half listened to, still less danced to.

"I love this idea," laughs Fourgeaud modestly, "but I don't plan on that. My culture is very superficial, I know, I never even read anything by André Breton. All I knew is that I wanted to explore some idea of the history of music alongside the contemporary. There is so much electronic music around which doesn't give a shit about its heritage. Then, there are retro records which don't give a shit about the present day. By making an album that wasn't retro and wasn't entirely modern, I wanted to step outside of time altogether."

Despite her supposed piety at the jagged inroads of contemporary dance music, one of the keynote aspects of *Smash* is the appearance of Fourgeaud's mother, who sings on the opening track, "Utopia", as well as the curiously broken up lyric of "Fast Life". She contributed at an early stage of the process. Fourgeaud, looking to give "Utopia" a bit of a spiritual lift, but afraid to have in outside vocalists and forth to go for the easy option of a sample, asked her over to dinner and then to sing for her supper. Moreover, he got his four year old niece to narrate the demented fairy tale of "Oh Boy", while he was over at his grandmother's.

"You know, in gipsy or flamenco music, it's a part of the culture that the whole family is involved," says Fourgeaud. "I like the anti-cool aspect of having your mother sing on your album. I'm proud of that, because it stands in opposition to this whole silly tradition of rock teenage rebellion, the idea that you have to break traditions in order to become a man." Ironic, of course, given that it was precisely such a rebellious impulse which gave birth to Jackson And His Computer Band, but it's of such beautifully unresolved and perfectly embracable contradictions that *Smash* is made up. □ *Smash* is out now on Warp

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# MAZEN KERBAJ

## By Julian Cowley



War child: Mazen Kerbaj

"I can detect in some of my solo music a strong influence of the war soundscapes of my youth," remarks Lebanese trumpeter Mazen Kerbaj, whose birth in Beirut in 1975 coincided with the start of the long, factional civil war that tore the city apart. "I never meant to make helicopter or bomb sounds on the trumpet, but I have to admit that a lot of the sounds I use are very similar to war sounds. Even my way of using them and their relation to silence is somehow connected to the war."

In light of this observation, Kerbaj's radical departure from the trumpet's inherent instrumental identity and conventional terms of playing, which can be heard on the recently issued solo set *Bitr Vrt Zrt Krt* (Al Maslakh), acquires extra emotional and psychological depth, not to mention historical context. "I have also to admit," he confesses, "that I've been nostalgic for those war sounds of my youth, as you can be nostalgic for a smell or picture, or the taste of a cake that you can never find again. At least not with the same flavour that it used to have."

It's a sobering admission. The violence and destruction that characterised the normality of his childhood reverberate into a controlled, yet uncompromising and idiosyncratic music. With a touch of irony, he adds, "It should be no surprise that Peter Brötzmann's *Machine Gun* was the first disc of European Improv I bought."

Kerbaj started playing trumpet around a decade ago. He took formal lessons, but exposure to European improvised music, free jazz and contemporary composition blew open his musical horizons. "I listened to saxophone and trombone players on CD since there seemed to be almost no history for the trumpet in free improvisation, except [trumpeter and composer] Rakesh Mehta's inspiring work," he states. "I was jealous of all the guitarists and pianists who could 'prepare' their instruments so easily, and felt I had to find a way to do the same on trumpet."

His ongoing search draws unexpected sounds from the instrument that can then be developed into a musically useful vocabulary. At present he uses the trumpet as a tone generator, extending it with a long rubber hose attached to a tenor saxophone mouthpiece. He employs circular breathing techniques and blocks the bell with objects such as bowls and metal sheets that vibrate to create an additional percussive layer, which can also be manipulated.

Kerbaj's explorations were well underway by the time he encountered others involved in deconstructing and reconstructing the trumpet's musical potential, such as Axel Dörner and Greg Kelley. In 2003, he met Austrian quartet trumpeter Franz Hautzinger, who was playing in Lebanon with Marwan Abada, a Vienna based Palestinian folk singer. The two trumpeters improvised informally and found they had techniques in common. Concerts followed, along with a duo recording, *Abu Tarek*, released by the Portuguese label Creative Sources. They also play together in Hautzinger's quartet *Desertal Space*, with guitarist Sharif Sennouci and Heinz Hinterregger on sampler.

Kerbaj and Sennouci play regularly as *Rouba3i* with alto saxophonist Christine Schnaouer. The group's name is based on the Arabic for quartet, and in performance they are joined by guest percussionists. The arrangement first arose in 2002 when Lê Quan Ninh played with them in Beirut. Later that year, in Paris, they were joined by Diner Bissoun and the *Rouba3i* concept took form. "Since then we always try to find occasions to invite a different drummer or percussionist to join us," Kerbaj explains. "The quartet has the advantages of both long-term working groups and first encounters, because the fourth musician – especially a percussionist – can change the shape of the core two's music." Norwegian improvising percussionist Ingrid Zach joined them for

## War and peace



the electrifying session that resulted in their recent release, *Rouba3i* (Al Maslakh).

Kerbaj launched the label Al Maslakh (The Slaughterhouse) earlier this year "to publish the unpublishable", and document the nascent Lebanese Improv scene. He not only oversees its output; as a talented visual artist and maker of comic books, he also designs the covers. "I have the same interest in improvisation or rhythm deconstruction in both media," he observes. The next release will feature a duo of Peter Brötzmann and percussionist Michael Zerang recorded in Beirut this summer.

Beruit's improvising scene is small, but firmly established due to the MILL association, which Zabeg set up with Sharif and Christine Schnaouci in 2000. "We were the only three free improvisers in the country and probably in all the Middle East and Gulf region, excluding Israel," he says. "Sharif has strongly influenced my evolution on many levels. His prepared guitar drones and bowing techniques obliged me to dig hard to find ways to keep up. Christine is also very challenging to play with." The Schnaouci spend much of each year in Paris, but, since 2003, they have helped Kerbaj stage the annual *Irtjal* festival, drawing to Beirut international improvisers such as pianist Fred Van Hove and trombonist Johannes Bauer.

Kerbaj has just returned from a tour of America, performing with *Rouba3i* among other dates, including a trio with bassist Mike Bublock and cellist Vic Rawlings. Concerts in Europe and the United States provide opportunities for him to "play for 'trained' ears", he says. "The audience in Beirut is new to this music and their enthusiasm is really rewarding for us," he concludes, "but it's also necessary to test our work – in progress – before an audience with a history in free improvising." □ Mazen Kerbaj appears at the LMC Festival on 5 November – see *Out There*. *Bitr Vrt Zrt Krt* is out now on Al Maslakh, [www.kerbaj.com](http://www.kerbaj.com)



# OREN MARSHALL

## By Phil England

Tuba traveller: Oren Marshall

"It's a story about a guy who figures out that if he concentrates hard enough and meditates, he can make his limbs disappear," says tuba player Oren Marshall, explaining the title of his remarkable debut solo CD, *Introduction To The Story Of Spedy Sponda: Part One: In A Silent Room*. "Eventually his whole body disappears and he becomes this spint called Spedy Sponda. And in his spirit form, he enters people's dreams. That's the long and short of it."

Written for a performance at the disused hydraulic power station in East London's industrial wasteland of Wapping, Marshall's suite bathes in three to four seconds of natural reverb. "It's this huge room, this hard space with all this old machinery around," he enthuses. Toward the end of the piece, he plays five tubas at once using a series of plastic tubes. "You can put the instruments on the different bits of machinery around the audience," he says.

The piece passes through a number of contrasting sections – largely determined by effects pedals – at a relaxed, expansive pace. There are plaintive laments played over ambient soundscapes, distorted vocal solos over chugging basslines, and use of feedback that makes the tuba sound like a guitar. One episode sounds like a whale song, another like a conversation between exponents. There's some looping and layering with the help of digital delay, but it's all performed live and without overcuts.

A recent slate of promotional concerts has included stints at Rough Trade and Ray's Jazz shops in London, as well as an appearance at the Manchester Jazz Festival and a string of concerts in Holland. "It becomes a different piece in a different space," he explains, as we huddle together to avoid the rain outside Bar Italia opposite Soho's Ronnie Scott's jazz club. "The shape is the same all the time but it can change depending on the feeling or the atmosphere."

One of the reasons why the CD is impossible to pin down stylistically is due to his wide-ranging musical background. Marshall grew up in the suburbs of southwest London and was the product of mixed parents. "My mum's from the Middle East and my dad's from India," he says. "Music was a way to cut through the challenges of growing up in London and to connect with people."

Marshall realised his early dream of playing in a professional orchestra when his teacher had a stroke and went into a coma. He stood in for his ailing mentor in both the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Brass chamber group, but quickly became disillusioned with the orchestral lifestyle. And 19 years later, he still plays with London Brass, an ensemble that can count Moondog, Django Bates, Mark Anthony Turnage, Michael Nyman, Jack DeJohnette and John Surman among their past and present collaborators.

At around the same time in the mid-80s, Marshall became involved with the British jazz big band Loose Tubes just as they were taking off – something that was much more in tune with his wide-eyed approach to the world of music. He's not on the records, but he played numerous concerts with them and featured on their first demo tape. "That was exactly what I wanted to do – because of their openness to incorporating different styles, and learning different musical languages," he says.

Marshall was probably the only musician to have played in both Loose Tubes and The Jazz Warmons – penitil collective that were largely spilt along lines of colour. "I didn't feel that," says Marshall. "What was weird for me was the whole classical thing, which was much more segregated." But he remembers how, after a gig on the same night as a football match between England and Cameroon, one of his fellow musicians expressed relief that England had won. "He said, 'Ah, I can walk home safely tonight.' I realise I was probably a bit ignorant of those issues going on. I just never felt it within myself."

Over the years he has continued to collaborate with the musicians from Loose Tubes in various open-spit projects such as Microgroove, Django Bates's Delightful Precipice, Snapdragon Circus and various projects involving trumpeter Chris Bathelder, saxophonist Steve Buckley and bassist Eddie Parker. But it was discovering improvised music that allowed him to develop his individual voice. Marshall toured with The Ubiquity Orchestra and then played in Derek Bailey's Company Week in 1992. He went on to play in a series of 'tos with drummer Steve Noble, first featuring guitarist Billy Jenkins, then guitarist

## Communication routes

Davey Williams and, finally, Steve Buckley. "They were great fun and I learnt loads," he says. "People would come up and wouldn't believe it was an improvisation, but thought it was a structured piece. That's also where I had the chance to really wing out the possibilities of what I could do with my pedals set up."

Marshall says that although he drives, the title of his first album with The Charming Transport Band, *Time Spent Waiting At Traffic Lights* (Slowfood) – released in the mid-90s, part solo, part collaborations – was equally a personal metaphor about not getting around to his own projects. Thankfully, the ginkgo appears to be clearing. "What seems to be happening in general is that things I've instigated or been part of instigating, I'm doing more of," he says.

Earlier this autumn, BBC Radio 3 broadcast his latest composition, *The Downfall Of Man*, a duo for tuba, penny whistle and brass clarinet. As well as his various solo concerts, Marshall toured the UK in October as a guest of The FIRE Collective, and he is looking forward to touring and recording this month with Bathelder and Buckley's quartet Big Air, featuring Myra Melford and Jim Black. "One of my favourite ever projects," he says. He is also playing in a new trio with Portuguese musicians Rafael Toral and César Burago as part of the Atlantic Waves festival; in addition, he relishes the prospect of playing London's Scala venue at the invitation of singer-songwriter Patrick Wolf. "I've played big venues with Microgroove when we supported Gil Scott-Heron and Roy Ayers, but I've never had the opportunity to really tear the place apart on solo tuba."

Marshall uses a dietary analogy to sum up his approach to music. "I'm just playing," he concludes. "The way I pick up my influences is like whatever the mouth eats. So I could have a salt beef sandwich today and pizza tomorrow, fatfaf the day after, and sushi the next. And in terms of audiences, it's whoever's got open ears. It's about communicating." □

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## Andy Hamilton joins the ethnomusicological trail to hear gamelan far from the maddening tourist crowds

It's true, Bali is a paradise. The small Indonesian island is beautiful, and music and art are found there in unparalleled concentration and abundance. The fertile soil and high rice yield allow the Balinese leisure time to devote to their crafts, intended both for tourists and for the gods. Their religion is a mixture of animism and Buddhism, and brightly coloured, intricately worked offerings are seen everywhere, particularly on doorsteps in the morning. Statues are clothed in what look like chequered tablecloths, black and white to signify the balance of good and evil.

The Al-Qaeda bombings in Kuta in 2002, and then the Schipelle Cobty drug smuggling case – which has dominated Australian news headlines for much of the last year – have kept visitor levels below their peak. The recent bombings, as we go to press, will do likewise for a time. But, when I stayed in Ubud, the artistic capital in the interior, the streets were busy enough, with scooter drivers touring for tourist business. This was in complete contrast to the view across the tranquil rice fields from my bungalow accommodation at Greenfield on the edge of Ubud. I was visiting in July on the suggestion of my guide Stephen Davies, who many Western ethnomusicologists following in the footsteps of Colin McPhee, who in the 1930s revealed to the West the island's glorious musical culture. This is the best time of year to make the trip: the month long arts festival in the capital Denpasar features performers from all over the island, and, as Bali is just south of the Equator, the winter – or dry season – takes a few degrees off the heat.

The Balinese have a huge pride in their traditional culture. Although extremely friendly, many of them no doubt share the view quoted by Davies in his book *Musical Works And Performances*: "They are tourists and we are civilised." When tourism took off in the 70s, cultural guidelines saw that enclave resorts such as Nusa Dua were created to limit the direct impact. Village music and dance groups were supported by competitions, and schools of dance and art were created, replacing the traditional master-disciple relationship and standardising dance movements. Traditional stories such as the Hindu Ramayana epic have been turned into ballets aimed at the tourism industry.

The festival is not particularly aimed at tourists, though, and features classical dances such as Legong and Baris, which are wedded to the music. I caught a superb Legong performance by a dance group from the town of Sukawati. As before every performance, there was a blessing by priests, and the mostly local audience was, as always, enthusiastic and



A kecak performance in Ubud (left), a billboard outside the venue



knowledgeable. All this comes with a degree of informality. Usually a dog wanders onstage at some point – here, they're many, encircled beasts you wouldn't want to pat – but this time it was a small child. Three pieces were performed: a traditional narrative about a prince, a princess and a bird; a more abstract piece representing two herons flying over a lake; and a dance of two monkeys. These featured incredibly sophisticated performances by young girls, statley but full of delicate expression – there are nearly 30 different hand gestures, for instance, and when the dancers are stationary they have to avoid appearing 'dead' by betraying some tiny movement, such as fluttering fingers or eyes. The stylised movements are locked into the music of the gamelan.

Java and Bali are the heart of gamelan – 'gamelan' is Indonesian for orchestra, though in Bali they refer to the orchestra as a 'gong'. In Bali, gamelan flourished in splendid isolation until the gradual encroachment of Dutch colonisation during the 19th century. While most kinds of Javanese gamelan remain retrospective, a brilliant new style appeared in the villages of north Bali early in the last century, rapidly overtaking the country traditional gamelan in popularity. This highly syncopated gamelan gong kebyar requires feats of extraordinary musical virtuosity – not least by the xylophone players, who damp each note with their fingers while playing the next one. But the courtly gamelan semar pagulingan can still be heard, while the gamelan pelogongan accompanies legong dances. Each variety of gamelan has a specific function, instrumentation, repertoire and tuning system. The music is learned painstakingly by rote, and there's little improvisation.

The orchestra consists of several kinds of gongs and various sets of xylophones and other metallophones, while the drum or kendang acts as leader. Each instrument is tuned to its own particular orchestra and so musicians don't play with others outside their ensemble. Unlike Javanese gamelan, where there are two sets of instruments, one tuned to the five note scale of slendro and the other to the seven note pelog, only one scale is used in Balinese gamelan. The highly developed polyphony or heterophony – where one melody is played differently by the multiple voices – has a cyclical structure totally opposed to the linear forms of the West. Over this variegated pattern of hammered sound floats the uninterrupted melodic line of the flute, flute or rebab, a bowed string instrument – the line is sung especially when, as is often the case, the gamelan is used to accompany theatrical performances.

Outside the festival, I went to a regular tourist event, the kecak, fire and trance dance at Taman Sari Temple in the centre of Ubud. Walter Spies, another Balinese, commissioned kecak in the 1930s as a tourist performance, and it was inspired by trance dances where male group singing has an exorcistic role. This performance featured an exciting episode from the Ramayana epic, but the tourists were less attentive than the locals at the Festival. The kecak (which Westerners also call the monkey dance) is featured on alternate evenings to the frog dance, which is even more of a tourist event.

Finally I went to a private performance at Yogyakarta Puloseni near Ubud, an arts centre run by Australian ethnomusicologist Doug Myers – yes, there are more ethnomusicologists per square mile in Bali than anywhere in the world. ("Yogyakarta" means association or society, "puloseni" means pure art.) Like Colin McPhee, Myers has made the island his home, and runs a label releasing historic recordings of all varieties of gamelan from Bali and Java (www.goarch.com). The yogyakarta runs several performing groups, but this evening played host to the group Leko Cempaka Sari. "Leko is a rare form," comments Stephen Davies, who commissioned the performance. "It belongs to the joged dances, 'social' dances in which women dance with male audience members – though it's a clean version. But it also has a connection with legong. The orchestra of this particular group is quite unique." As an honoured guest, I was first to get called to the dance floor, with truly encouraging results.

Next day, Doug Myers gave me a tutorial and explained how the instruments of the gamelan are mostly in pairs, tuned – by shoving the metal – fractionally apart. The 'beating' effect that results gives these ensembles their shimmering brilliance. Music is played for the gods, Myers adds, and in a way by the gods, since they're responsible for how far the instruments go out of tune between tunings. Though Indonesian versions of Western pop, rock and dance music are heard over the island, the gamelan, sustained by its religious associations, is genuinely popular. While the academic experts try to preserve its rarer forms, authentic gamelan seems to be surviving the pressures of Bali's growing Westernisation. But as Davies comments, "In the end the abandonment of the communarian way of life will take the arts out of the hands of the many amateurs and put them in the hands of a few professionals – lots will be lost in the process. Just like in the West." □ Thanks to Stephen Davies and Doug Myers for their help with this article

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**Born in 1936 in New York, Steve Reich's music studies began in the late 1950s, a time dominated by the rigours of serialism and the mathematically involved music of the Darmstadt school. Reich studied at Cornell University, Juilliard and Mills College, Oakland, from which he graduated in 1963, then he set about rebelling against this academic orthodoxy in music teaching.**

Fascinated by syncopated rhythms and phase patterns, Reich pared down his musical vocabulary, composing the gradual tape-phasing pieces *Come Out and It's Gonna Rain* in 1966, and their instrumental counterparts, *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase*, the following year. Reich was soon labelled as a minimalist, after the movement in the visual arts, together with another disillusioned ex-music student, Philip Glass, and composers like Terry Riley and La Monte Young, all of whom sought a more direct musical language. In 1968, Reich came up with *Pendulum Music*, in which microphones were swung on long leads over speakers on the floor causing feedback. Nudging an hour, *Drumming* (1971) was his first large-scale work, influenced by his drumming studies at the University of Accra in Ghana in 1970.

Another influential musical form was Balinese gamelan, which he studied in the USA. It informed the greater harmonic content of *Music For Mallet Instruments, Voices And Organ* (1973). This was developed further in the kaleidoscopic ensemble pieces *Music For 18 Musicians*, *Music For A Large Ensemble* and *Octet* (1979), later retitled *Eight Lines*. Reich both developed his writing for voice and examined his Jewish roots in *Tehillim* (1981), inspired by Hebrew cantillation.

In 1989, Reich wrote *Different Trains* for string quartet, samples and tape which referenced his journeys between New York and California as a child during World War Two and the fate of European Jews in the Holocaust. Into the 90s, Reich developed his interest in narrative strands in music theatre projects like *The Cave*, which he wrote with his partner, the installation and video artist Beryl Korot, and also their multimedia production, *Three Tales*, premiered in 2002.

Reich's music continues to develop along a number of paths, including multiple instrumental pieces like *Nagoya Marimbas* (1994), *Proverb* (1995), based on medieval French counterpoint, and *City Life*, in which he incorporates his urban field recordings. His most recent work, *You Are (Variations)*, for six-part chorus and large ensemble, uses extracts of philosophical texts. The Jukebox took place in London.

## CHARLIE PARKER "BONGO BEEP"

FROM ANTHOLOGY (ACCORD 1947)

Sounds like Charlie Parker. I used to know the title, but I don't anymore. It's "Bongo Beep". This has Max Roach on drums. I could tell it wasn't Kenny Clarke. Well, this is the kind of stuff that I heard at the age of 14 that, along with Johann Sebastian Bach and Igor Stravinsky, woke me up to who I was.

**What sort of music did you listen to when you were growing up?**

The records in the house were like the overture to [Wagner's] *Die Meistersinger*, Beethoven's fifth, the Schubert Unfinished, [Aaron Copland's] *Grand Canyon Suite*, George Gershwin, some Gilmore and Sullivan – you know, middle-class favourites. But I do love George Gershwin. Probably there was some Mozart somewhere, but I never heard any Haydn and I certainly didn't hear any Bach – anything before 1750. The popular music I heard was Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Broadway shows, but I never heard any jazz. It was as if someone said, "Hey, there's another room in the house that you haven't been in yet," and open the door, and out comes Charlie Parker, Bach and Stravinsky. When I heard these music in pretty quick succession on recordings, [I thought] "Hey, wait a minute, this is what I've been waiting for."

**How did you get into jazz drumming?**

I was in high school and I had a friend who was a better pianist than I was, and who was actually beginning to study jazz, so I just decided I was going to be the drummer. God knows why. I had been studying piano but I'd never made that much progress, so I began studying with Roland Kohlhoff, who in those days was called Butch Kohlhoff. He eventually turned out to be the tympanist with the New York Philharmonic. But, in those days – I'm talking about 1950 – he would play Gene Krupa solos in the local movie house with 'glow in the dark' sticks [laughs]. Anyway, he gave me very good basic snare drum technique and something called stick control, which is a hand alternation pattern that I realised later had a lot to do with the systematic thinking that I got into. And, of course, the paradigm is one of these hand coordination patterns, and became part [of the mechanistic rhythm] of different tracks much, much later on. If you need a locomotive you can't get better than that.

**What was the name of your first jazz group?**

I don't even remember. But later on, at Cornell [University], I put together my own band, which had my own name on it. When I got out of Cornell in 1957, I came down to New York and started studying composition with Hal Ornstein. Hal was a jazz musician and Juilliard graduate, and a student of Vincent Persichetti. He was also a very close friend of Thelonious Monk. Monk gave these very well known concerts in the late 50s at the Town Hall and the arrangements for the big band that he put together were by my teacher, Hal. He was a marvelous guy. He was the one that really got me involved with Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, that got me working with the modes as opposed to the major and minor keys, and working with canons, which became the backbone of my music. So all these things fit together.

## MUSZIKÁS

"THE ROOSTER IS CROWING"

FROM MÁRÁNYMOSZ: THE LOST JEWISH MUSIC OF TRANSYLVANIA (HANNIBAL 1998)

I've not heard this before, but I'm guessing Eastern Europe. It's like something I'd hear in a Hungarian restaurant. I don't think this was the kind of stuff that Bartók recorded. [Vocals come in] Nice voice. Lovely, beautiful language. No, I take it back: this is better than the restaurant [laughs].

This is a reconstruction job that the Hungarian traditional group *Muzsikás* made of Jewish music they gathered in Romania and Hungary, a tradition that was thought to have been destroyed in the Holocaust. Another collector heard their arrangements and commented that "the dead notes are alive again".

What you just played is terra incognita to me. My limited background in 'Jewish music' is really just studying the chant of the Torah, the sopherot, in synagogues in the West and in recordings that I actually made in Israel of Jews from Baghdad, Jews from Iraq, Kurdistan and Kochi, India. What you're playing, I didn't even recognise it as being specifically Jewish, because so far as I understand it – and I'm not an expert in this at all – Jews who were living in eastern Europe were picking up on local music and doing their versions of it.

**So where does the chanting you use in *Tehillim* originally come from?**

It's entirely my invention. I've said this over and over again, and I'm always told what I did, and it's always wrong. I did study cantillation and the only effect that it had on me musically nobody can perceive. It's actually in the first flute melody in *Octet* – or *Eight Lines*, as this piece became known, a long melody line made up of a number of shorter patterns strung together. It's not that it sounds Jewish, it's just that in the way that you chant Torah and the way Muslims, I believe, chant Allah in the Koran, there are little motifs that you learn by ear from your teacher. These are signified in Jewish scripture by a little accent mark. It actually is an ancient musical notation. The Greeks called it chironomy, showing with the hand how the music went... I discovered this by reading a book called *Jewish Music* by Abraham Idelsohn, who was a contemporary of Bartók, and who used to go around the Middle East collecting the chanting of Yemenite Jews, who lived in Arab countries, at the same time as Bartók was going around with his Edison phonograph collecting folk songs in Transylvania and eastern Europe. What he discovered was that there was a real similarity between the way the Yemenites sang the psalms and Gregorian chant.

Anyway, that's the sort of study that I had of Jewish music. This kind of music that you're playing eventually leads today to The Klezmatics and to Klezmer, which is a kind of upbeat robust music that might have been played at Jewish weddings in eastern Europe before Hitler. I can admire the music and I can admire the musicians who follow it, but it was just something that I never got into. I wanted to find out what was the rub of this thing, what was the core of Jewish music. And the core of it, of what is native to the Jews, is in the synagogue. And that oral tradition of one man chanting from the parchment scroll is the one that I tried to follow up, in the Western tradition and in the non-Western tradition.

## SUSUMU YOKOTA

"GEKKOH"

FROM SAKURA (GEAR 2000)

**I'm interested in your reaction to this.**

[Indistinctly] Well, I know that, [Percussion comes in] Whoops, I don't know that after all. Uh-oh, time to call the lawyers! [Laughs]. Gosh, I thought I was aware of all the various samplings but this is a new one, OK, folks, it's the beginning of *Music For 18 Musicians*, "Pulse", pretty much staying on one chord and added percussion, and let's see what happens. Is this recent? Yes, 2000. It's by Japanese musician and DJ Susumu Yokota.

[Reads press quotes on sleeve] "Electronica album of the year." Hey, I want a piece of the action. And you said it – The Wire. Hey, guilty as charged. Get two lawyers! Ah, he's reharmonising my harmony.

different bass. It's nice, I like his choice of reharmonisation. Well, you know, this is pretty. As a track it's nicely done and I guess my attitude to all this stuff in general is that I write a piece of music and if people listen to it and love it, I feel good, right? Now, if other musicians hear it – aside from all the legal issues – and they get something out of it, that's even more so. In and of itself, they say imitation is the most sincere form of flattery.

**But wouldn't you make the distinction between imitation and someone actually helping themselves to a piece of your music?**

I think here he's obviously taken off in his own direction. He liked the idea of a pulse and chose one of the chords, and from there went on his way. Even when I heard "Little Ruffly Clouds" by The Orb [which samples Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*], we never sued them. Years passed and then there was the Reich Remixed album. And all these people volunteered the rights to me. Basically, it wasn't my music. It was their music, but I was the beneficiary of it, so it all works itself out in the end, I wouldn't get all hot and bothered about this in a negative way at all. In fact, I get a kick out of it, and I enjoyed the track. You picked a provocative one that was a very good choice. I hadn't heard it. I'm glad I have heard it.

**Your own use of sampling is different than that you only use sounds that you've recorded yourself.**

I'm not interested in sampling music. I'm interested in sampling things that are non-musical and bringing them into the music, so I never have that problem. I'm interested in bringing the world, as in City Life and as in *The Cave*, into the concert hall and the opera house. My attitude to sampling? I see it as sort of folk music of our time. So this Japanese DJ is sampling music around him and then arranging it. People were taking other people's music and rearranging it in the Middle Ages. "L'Homme Armé" was an enormously popular folk tune and composers from Dufay all the way up to Palestrina – that's 200 years ago – all wrote masses for the church, hidden away inside of which was "L'Homme Armé". [Reich sings the melody] A really good solid tune. As a matter of fact, in *Are You (Variations)*, squirmed away inside of the third variation was "L'Homme Armé". Yeah, I put it in the programme notes; mea culpa, if that guy still had a copyright, man, he'd even be making as much money as James Brown [laughs]. Anyway, Susumu Yokota, I enjoyed your music.

## CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE

DUO STRUMMING FOR TWO

HARPSICHORDS: THREE EXCERPTS (1978) FROM CONTINUOUS SOUND FORMS (ALIAS MARCHON 1978)

[After a while] This guy's got an idle fixe. Charlemagne Palestine?

**Yes it is. He is one of your contemporaries.**

I heard Charlemagne give a lot of performances and I remember [they] were called Strumming Music. [Strumming of harpsichord strings comes in after lengthy repetition of two chords] Here we go, see at least how he's thickening the play here. We have to wait a long time for something to come in and give us a significant change. Repetition for me would start out as repetition, but then something would change. You'd have to hang in there for as much as a minute, tops, before the change came in. At first we were just presented with a tremolo. Oh, here we go – some rhythmic variations. I think pieces like this are more dramatic in performance. He was a good performer and the energy that he put into it would be transmitted and make it a lot more interesting than in a recording.

**I shouldn't really use the 'M' word, but...**

Go right ahead, you're a journalist, you're entitled. What about minimalism?

He's still doing a similar type of music now, rigorous and very minimal. Your own work has gradually expanded from pieces as pared down as *Penalum Music or Music For Pieces Of Wood to the large ensemble arrangements of your most recent recording, You Are (Variations). How easy was it to develop your music, while sticking to a consistent aesthetic?*

Well, you see, there were never any manifestos. When I wrote the essay, "Music As A Gradual Process" in 1968, I was looking back at what I'd already done and trying to understand it better. It was in no way a manifesto about what I was going to do in the future and I never had an attitude that I am a card-carrying minimalist or anything else – I think that's absurd. I was doing what felt exciting and musically irresistible and one of the turning points was the end of *Drumming*. I had been doing music only for multiples of the same instrument, so I could get this interlocking web you so can't tell who's playing what; it's just a bunch of marimbas, or it's just four pianos, or it's electric organs, or it's just multiple violins. When I got to the end of *Drumming*, there they were: three glockenspiels, three marimbas, a line of bongo drums, two singers and a piccolo player. So being a Westerner, I felt obliged to put this stuff together. That was the beginning of going back to traditional orchestration. And then as you know, *Music For Mallet Instruments, Voices And Organ* is introducing some harmonic movement and that leads to *Musica*. For J.B. Musicians, which completely blows it all wide open. I did an interview with Michael Nyman, who in those days was more writing about music than writing music, and he asked me, "So you're not interested in minimal music?" I said, "No, I'm interested in music. I'm interested in doing the next thing that I want to do."

## LAURIE ANDERSON

"LANGUAGE IS A VIRUS FROM OUTER SPACE – WILLIAM S BURROUGHS"

FROM UNITED STATES LIVE (WARNER BROS/ERIE 1984)

Sounds like Laurie Anderson. Nice.

**Have you seen any of her performances?**

Oh sure. We've been on benefits together. We know each other. This is "Language Is A Virus", which is the name of the album, right?

**This is actually from United States Parts I-IV, recorded live in 1984.**

Oh, this goes back to that? I saw that way back when. It was a long haul. It got a little much for me when I saw the two nights together. What we've just heard is great and I love her storytelling. There was a recent piece that she did about [Herman] Melville (*Moby Dick*) and that had a scene where she was in a huge chair. The image stuck in my head. What I like about her performances is that she has an incredible way of telling a story. She's certainly not a rap artist, but it partakes of the same phenomena, of being able to tell your story, the timing of voice, through the unusual choice of words and interrupting the story with music. She just gets your attention.

**Your music might have had an influence on her, but did her performance pieces in the 80s have any effect on your music theatre pieces?**

No, no, no, no. If you know *Bernd [Kont]'* previous work in galleries and museums, she was one of the pioneers of multi-channel installations. So basically *The Cave* is taking a multi-channel video installation, putting it into a theatre and surrounding it with the musicians. Her pieces were always kinda long, so very often in museums people would come in take a look and go, and she'd think, "Gee, I wish they'd stay for the whole piece." And so, when we were discussing *The Cave*, I said, "You'll finally get an audience that's captive, that's going to go through

two and a half hours from beginning to end." So that's where that came from.

## VARIOUS

"WAZA"

FROM BLUES NILE – SUDAN (MUSEUM COLLECTION BERLIN/WERGO) 1993/9

We're in Africa. We're in Central Africa, I think. Multiple horns. This is great.

**This comes from Sudan.**

Could be from southern Sudan. This is very, very similar to music from Central Africa, which the French musicologist Simha Arom has transcribed and he took a lot of multiple horn honking stuff, guys each playing a one-note horn.

**Tell me about your drumming studies at the University of Accra in Ghana.**

I actually studied with The Ghana Dance Ensemble who were in residence at the university, but my lessons were usually in the courtyards outside during their breaks. There's no music like this in Ghana. It's primarily drumming and some xylophone music from the tribes in the North. I was studying with the Ewe tribe who were actually from Togo, but were living in Ghana and I was studying a little Ashanti music. They are the predominant ruling tribe. What I played in Ghana was what was played when somebody died, the anniversary of their death, when somebody got married, when somebody got born and when there was a new chief installed. Music was part of life and just when I went there and [President] Nkrumah came in with the beginnings of a Western-style government, and this was when the local chiefs lost their wallets, so to speak, and all that money floated to the capital and the best musicians had two choices: either stay at home and work in the chocolate factories, have a day gig and fulfill your normal function as part of society, or try to get a gig with Ghana Dance Ensemble and tour the world. But what you played me is the real stuff. Is the real stuff still there? Gee, I don't know, but it's magnificent. It's unique and these recordings are like museum pieces.

**Was it difficult to learn a completely different drum style to the one you were used to when you were in Ghana?**

The first thing I encountered was a book, *Studies In African Music* by AM Jones, who was a British cleric who lived in what was then called Rhodesia and then went to Ghana. He wanted to be able to write this stuff down and he invited a master drummer, Desmond Tay, to come to the School of Oriental and African Studies [at the University of London]. He rigged up a machine almost like a cardigan, with a moving sheet of graph paper and two metal pencils and he, Jones, would tap out this bell pattern, which was constant in African music [Reich demonstrates]. Desmond Tay would play each of the individual drum parts against what Jones was playing. So what Jones ended up with was a graphic representation of each part, which he then transcribed – [they were the] first Western transcriptions that you could trust of African music. But to answer your question, yeah, it was hard to do, because basically your downtime is not the same downtime as the guy sitting next to you, so you've really got to relate to that bell and almost, as a Westerner, shut out for a while the guy playing next to you as he's putting you somewhere else you didn't want to be. I recorded the lessons on a little three-speed tape recorder, which I'd slow it down when I listened to it later. Finally, after three or four times, I'd get it right and I had it all on tape, the mistakes with the correct stuff. Then I'd slow it down and make transcriptions of what I learned – principally a piece called "Gahu", which is a good time, get drunk and enjoy yourself kind of dance. So yes, it was a totally different world.





## KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN

KONTAKTE (EDIT)

FROM OHM: THE EARLY GURUS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC

1948-1960 (ELPUS 818 ARTBL 9599-60)

From Africa to electronics [from doorknob rings]. Even more electronics. This is what we used to call, when I was a student, 'Bloop-bleep music'. I have no idea what this piece is. Is it an early Varese electronic piece? It's Stockhausen's *Kontakte*, recorded in 1957 with James Tenney on piano and William Winant on percussion.

Really? Well, I never did pay much attention to that. It definitely was the other side of the coin. This is the sort of music I had to grit my teeth and get through. When I went to music school, late 50s through 63 when I got my MA, this was all you could do. You could sound like Boulez, Cage, Stockhausen, Beno, etc., or get laughed at. Fortunately, I ended up studying with Luciano Beno, who was more musical than many of the others, and also very, very generous in his attitude. He loved to hear John Cage, too. The pieces of Stockhausen that I did actually enjoy were *Gesang Der Jünglinge*, which was on a record with *Electronic Studies*, which was just sine-wave generators, and there was *Gesang Der Jünglinge*, which was electronics with the voice. I thought, the voice is what's making the piece come alive. It was one of the many things, along with some of Beno's electronic stuff with voice, that made me feel that I wanted to work with voice, that opened the door, eventually, to it's Gonna Rain and Come Out. But this kind of stuff – I think it's as

ugly today as it was then. It seemed to me; why on earth do this? I don't care about your theories of rhythm becoming pitch, or harmony coming to an end; I don't believe that anyway. I think that Schoenberg was wrong and Debussy was right. I just think it was a big mistake. Stockhausen is maybe a genius of sorts, but one of those people whose music I don't have any desire to hear whatsoever.

## PAN SONIC

'JOHTO 2'  
FROM A BLAST FIRST \*\*\*\*

I like it, there's a kind of humour and darkness and musicality all running at the same time.

It's *Pan Sonic* from Finland. They used to be

called *Panasonic*.

Oh, can't do that. Big time lawyers [laughs.] The less said the better.

This is a *Techno* hybrid that might have been influenced by your music.

Well, you know, it ought to be said, it ain't what you do, it's how you do it. That's my firm belief. And these guys, so far, I don't know how the CD would bear up, they've got something and they're developing it and they're having fun with it. Is this a *PownBook* group? This would have been circuit manipulation.

So this is back in the 90s? Dials and patchboards. Here they come to London to perform?

I've seen them once. The sub-base notes were quite disturbing live.

I could see if you had this cranked up on gigantic

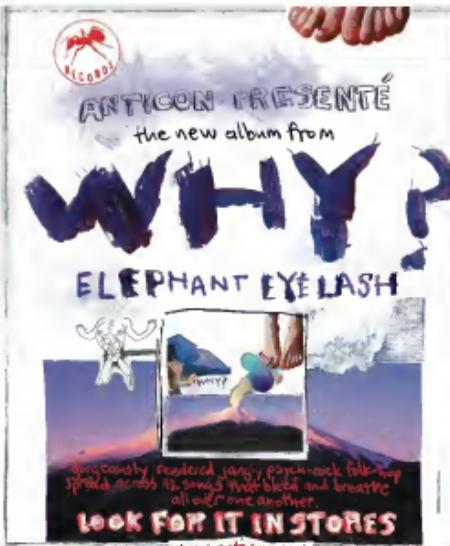
speakers it could shake the floor. They really are heavy on the low end.

## Does this sort of music interest you?

After *City Life* was done, I got a card from Germany from some guy and the whole card was [based on speech sample in the piece] 'Can't take no more. Take no, Techno' [laughs]. So I think a lot of these guys did hear the early pieces, but they've probably listened to Stockhausen, too, and took a totally different direction. I drove from New York to Vermont because we have a house up there. It's about a five and a half hour drive, and part of the drive goes past a whole bunch of colleges near Amherst, Massachusetts. I usually put the radio on, pick up a college station, I come into the zone and when the radio came on, there was some kind of electronica, and it was interesting. And it kept going and going until I went out of range. It was about 25 minutes and I was going 75 miles an hour. The thought crossed my mind that I could imagine, some time in the not too distant future, young men and women with musical talent and a flair for technology, maybe having gone to music school, maybe not having gone to music school, choosing the avant garde electronic world as opposed to the composer's world. The classical music world is really in disarray. There's a lot of serious problems with orchestras and even in chamber music, as I can imagine a young person thinking, 'How am I going to make a living?' One of the things that they can do is to get involved in this area. This is interesting. It's not knocking me off my feet, but it's worth a listen, and I'm glad you played it for me. □

# black **A** cete: JOHN CALE

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**Since reforming Earth, once the missing link between Black Sabbath and La Monte Young, Dylan Carlson has added cosmic Country elements to their seismic, pulsing timbres to thwart revisionist views of America. Words: Edwin Pouncey. Photography: Bohdan Cap**

**A**t some ungodly hour on a Saturday night/Sunday morning at a venue called Koko in North London, the legendary *Seattle the Earth* shuffle onto the stage and studiously begin to tune up for their 40 minute contribution to All Tomorrow's Parties' Easy To Swallow showcase. Given that most of the audience are here to see electronic duo Autrechir, the appearance of Earth guitarist Dylan Carlson, drummer Adrienne Davies and bass player Jason Haskins – must be both frustrating and perplexing for anyone expecting a little laptop action. Ignoring calls to "geronwxit" from the heaving crowd below them, Earth launch into the introduction to their much maligned fourth studio album *Pentastar: In The Style Of Demons* (1996), which sounds like it weighs a thousand tons as it slowly erupts from their amplifiers and flows like lava across the dance floor. Gradually mesmerised by the narcoleptic beauty and sullen heft of its massive power drone, the crowd begin to sway in time to its elongated beat like a basket of cobras. Once they get into their stride with material from their new album *Heav'n Or Printing In The Informal Method*, Earth's cavernous, all-consuming sound generates an infectious slo-mo drive that causes everyone to nod in unison.

For all the all-consuming impact of Earth's drone-induced power surges, the way their glacial pace stretches time eventually reveals the spaces and chiming dissonances that hold their songs together. "There would be a song where I'd hit a dissonant note and there'd be a vibration," explains Carlson before their concert. "I would count the number of vibrations and go to the next part. It was like listening to that and hearing what was going on in the upper registers of that kind of music. A lot of people think that the drone in music is just making a noise, but there's actually a structure to it that evolves out of the overtone series."

The more obvious origins of Carlson's ideas might be rooted alongside groups like Black Sabbath and

contemporary drone rockers The Melvins, but he's keen to point out that his understanding of music goes deeper than a thorough knowledge of Black Sabbath's *Master Of Reality* album. His appreciation of the drone dominating Earth's early work is the result of studying the techniques of such minimalist masters as La Monte Young and Terry Riley. "I heard Terry Riley's *Personality Derivatives* on the French label, *Shanachie*," he recalls, almost sadly. "Then I got La Monte Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano* boxed set and *The Second Dream Of The High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer* that Gramavision put out. At the same time I was listening to early Ted Nugent stuff like "Hibernation" or "Strangefield", where he's using feedback and really repetitive riffs, and wanting it to be more. I started thinking that if somebody took those hard rock riffs and played them like La Monte Young, then something cool would happen."

"La Monte Young wrote some technical articles where I read about the false harmonic that's generated from the vibration of the ear," he continues. "Before I started playing with anybody, I took a guitar and tuned it to open strings. I was training myself to hear the overtone series and combining that with a rock or Metal aesthetic."

Going back to 1990, these experiments using Young's harmonic theories and methods became the basic blueprint for early Earth units, when Carlson teamed up with bass players Dave Harwell and Joe Preston (who doubled up on percussion). When they uncoupled their application of Young's theories from the group's drone Metal core, their audience proved less tolerant. On *Pentastar*, Carlson essayed an experimental piano solo called "Sonar And Depth Charge". He perceived it as a genuine attempt to enlarge his own ideas about instrumentation and space, but many critics dismissed it as mere filler.

"A lot of people couldn't understand what 'Sonar And Depth Charge' was doing on this rock album," he

sighs. "That was the first time I'd been in a studio that had a piano, so I thought I would try and do something with it. Unfortunately, it wasn't a grand piano – it was an upright with a broken keyboard – so it was a somewhat failed experiment," he admits. "One of the reviews said that I had scared myself and had retreated into making rock records," he laughs. "So many people reacted badly towards *Pentastar* like, 'Oh, he's making rock music now! Like that's such a horrible thing!'"

Before Earth got to make *Pentastar*, however, Carlson's wild and erratic behaviour had already provoked his label Sub Pop to pull the plug twice on sessions while he attempted to lay down the tracks for the more experimentally edged *Phase 3: Thrones And Dominions* (1996), which Carlson today considers among his best recordings. His deteriorating relationship with the label delayed the album's release by over a year. "Nothing I do is going to be a pure genre record," remarks Carlson, regarding the drug-fuelled electric odyssey that spawned *Phase 3*. "It's going to be slow and have repetition, but every album I record will have something that will expand the music and help it grow. There are certain things I can't stop doing, because that's how my psyche's organised. No matter what I do, it's always going to be Earth."

Long before the events that caused both *Pentastar* and his private life to come crashing down, Earth's underground reputation had developed partly as a result of Carlson's longstanding friendship with Kurt Cobain, who committed suicide in 1994. Indeed, Carlson appears in the Nick Broomfield film *Kurt & Courtney*. Before Cobain's rise to stardom with Nirvana, the two friends constantly shared musical ideas, dating back to the pre-90s proto-grunge era, before Cobain became famous.

"When we lived in Olympia together, we did this weird noise collage thing with a bunch of old synths."



Earth (left): Jason Maskrey, Adrienne Davies, Dylan Carlson

Carlson recalls. "Then we started playing music with Tobi Vail, who was later in Bikini Kill. She played guitar and vocals, I played bass and Kurt played drums. We'd both gotten turned on to The Gang Of Four around then, so we were playing angular post punk. They weren't things that we were planning to pursue full time. It was just stuff we did together when we wasn't doing his thing."

Cobain and Carlson worked together on the first Earth recordings (partly released as bonus tracks on No Quarter's reissue of the 1995 *Blast First* CD *Sum Amps And Smashed Guitars Live*), which featured Cobain and Dickless' Kelly Canary on vocals. Recorded at Mike Lastra's Sigmatra Studios in Portland, Oregon, in October 1990, the sessions gave Carlson an opportunity to work outside of the usual rigid rock orthodoxy.

"He [Cobain] sings the lead vocal on 'Ovine And Bright,'" says Carlson. "I felt that his voice would be better for that song because it's a sort of pop song. But for 'A Bureaucratic Gear For Revenge,' I wanted different vocal textures. My voice was a monotone, his was a gravelly pop vocal and Kelly made cougar howls. I wanted to prevent it from becoming a straight pop song."

The Lastra sessions – not to mention Carlson's involvement – led to Seattle independent label Sub Pop offering Earth a deal. Originally planned (but later scrapped) for release on the label's ongoing Singles Club series, "A Bureaucratic Gear For Revenge" – together with another Carlson original "Ouborous Is Broken" – emerged on Sub Pop as a CD called *Extracapsular Extraction* (1992). But it was Earth's next record that cemented their reputation and gave birth to the then embryonic drone/stoner rock movement.

Carlson's relationship with Sub Pop was tempestuous and unpredictable, largely due to his problems with drugs, which he readily admits were unacceptable. But on a creative level he found an ally in Bruce Pavitt, who, along with Jonathan Poneman, had founded the label. Carlson propositioned Pavitt about the next Earth project, explaining that he wanted to make as extreme a statement as possible. "We'd talk to Bruce about how much we could fit onto a CD, which was about 73 minutes," recalls Carlson. "Unfortunately, you could only get 15 to 30 minutes on tape, then you had to string it all together."

Now stripped down to just Carlson on guitar and Dave Harwill on bass, the emerging *Earth 2: Special Low Frequency Version* (1993) sent out a low-slung, rock reverberation of seismic proportions, where Carlson's original concept of incorporating Sabbath-style rifts into La Monte Young's harmonic extensions was finally realised. Misunderstood or ignored at the time, *Earth 2* gradually accrued a cult following that later spawned such units as Sleep, Boris and Sunn O))), the latter claiming to be an Earth tribute band.

"We were just three guys getting together, getting pretty stoned and playing Earth rifts for fun at really low frequencies in the practice space we shared," confesses Southern Lord label boss and Sunn O))) member Greg Anderson (who has since signed Earth to a two album deal). "Then we eventually morphed into our own thing, and although Sunn O))) have since branched out into a new direction, Earth remain a huge influence on the band."

Anderson agrees about the impact of *Earth 2* on the current drone rock scene, especially after he was given access to the original mastertape, when Sunn O))) were invited to contribute to an album of Earth remakes – alongside Jim O'Rourke, Mogwai, Russell

Haswell, Justin Broadrick and Autechre – called *Legacy Of Disruption*.

"There's stuff on the *Earth 2* mastertapes that no one's heard before, because the released record was this mammoth fuzzed-out piece," Anderson reveals excitedly. "We spent hours just sitting there, soloing and isolating tracks and listening to what was going on. It gave us a whole new insight into that record. It was like taking a secret peek. There's actually a drum machine on there that was on the original track that they used as a timing guide, like a metronome. What else blew us away is that there's guitar on there that is really reminiscent of the stark, beautiful, clean tone Dylan is playing now."

The title of the Earth remakes album cites an ongoing series of instrumental pieces that Carlson refers to as "Dissolutions". The first of these was recorded way back at the Mike Lastra sessions, which Carlson now describes as being "like the sound of stuff falling apart. They haven't consciously been written as a series," he insists, attempting to explain the process. "A song might somehow evoke or become a facet of that original theme and it then becomes a new dissolution. There might or might not be another one, depending on what might happen in between."

The most recent dissolution was recorded during their 2002 East Coast Tour in New York City, an extended guitar and drum sludgefest where the central theme repeatedly dies and arises before entering crash and burn mode a full hour later. The results were released as *Living In The Gleam Of An Unheathed Sword* by Troublesome Records, a title that suggests the shows were somewhat gladiatorial. "That record is made up out of the two shows that were recorded," Carlson laughs. "I like the idea of a live recording being a snapshot of the event with no overdubbing to make it sound nice."

"We had these shows coming up and I'd just started performing again," he continues. "It was like, what are we going to do? Well, we've got this rift, so let's just go for it. There were nights when we were really on the ball, and others where we were falling apart."

Another example is "Dissolution II: Miami Coming Down (You Fuck)", which Carlson recorded for the Ash International compilation. Scatter, after disbanding Earth in 1997, it turned out to be his last public performance before going into limbo, but imbued with the familiar fuzzed out lead guitar drone glitters a sonic jewel that hints at the subtle change in direction he would take eight years later when Earth reformed with Hex. From the cocoon of blurred, repeated riffing of "Miami", a more complex, Eno-like filmic anthem emerges. It's at once separate from the rest of the song yet undeniably part of it. "I've always wanted to do music for films," confesses Carlson. "I hope it happens one day. For me, real film music creates a whole gestalt where the song allows you to enter another universe. It becomes a complete entity that surrounds you. I especially think that the new album has a very filmic quality to it."

Signed to a record label that cares about their music and welfare, Earth are now back on track with a brand new studio album out on the streets. Carlson, meanwhile, continues to muse over the direction he sees his music heading. "I started listening to a lot of instrumental music by people like Coone Eddy, back when instrumental music was a commercial dominant force," he responds, when asked about what influenced the songs on Hex. "I also started listening to the drone in Country And Western music – in the

way that they sing, how the banter rolls and there's always that open string. There's still that whole sense of the drone being present, playing against the note. As I've learned more about playing the guitar, I think Country guitar players are some of the best there are. I wanted to learn some of their styles and apply it to what I do with my music."

"Gram Parsons had this term, 'the cosmic American music', and that's how I kind of viewed it," he continues. "There is so much bullshit that has become identified with America, the revisionist history of America and how America views itself that I just wanted to express what America meant to me."

Another element that has filtered into Hex is Cormac McCarthy's lyrical western novel *Blood Meridian*: Or The Evening Redness In The West, a violent and sometimes beautiful work of fiction for which Carlson has composed a memorably vivid and almost orchestral soundtrack. "It always evoked Earth as being something other than guitar, bass and drums," he declares. "For the album I was planning before Sub Pop dropped me, I had booked a string and horn section. It was going to be a big production but that never happened. So Hex gave me the opportunity to do something like that, where we added trombone and pedal steel guitar to the regular line-up and martial some musical force."

A sense of foreboding and inherent evil pulse through the drones of Earth's latest invocation Hex. The sepia-toned photographs that adorn Stephen O'Malley's gatefold sleeve evoke this sense of strangeness still further. Carlson admits that the cover was another source of inspiration.

"Slim [Moon, former Earth member] once told me there was this theory that the American continent is evil and that all the bad stuff that's happened there has been a result of that," he says. "All of these people dumped on this landscape that's forbidding and dark. The Pennsylvania Dutch were these God-fearing Mennonite people who came to America and had to put these crazy hex signs on their possessions to protect them from whatever evil forces exist in America. They had to break with their austere religious tradition and practise magic. I think an occult history of America has yet to be written."

Hex might seem far removed from Earth's early work, but turn it up and beneath the shimmering pedal steel playing and the sampled stampeding of not so pretty little horses, lies the group's ever present rurality. Those hoping for *Earth 2* revisited might well walk away mystified, but the true admirer of Carlson and his unique musical vision will be enthralled by his dramatic new direction. "I'm glad that they didn't make Earth 2 or Pentastar again," agrees Anderson. "That shit was a long time ago and I don't like bands who make the same record over and over again, that's boring to me and stale.... I think people want to keep Dylan that way. They want to remember him in the Kurt & Courtney movie where he's not doing well at all. I think a lot of people want to keep him in that space and that's sick. It's fucked up."

But Carlson has never been one to rest on his laurels. On the face of it, his next project sounds as though he intends to explore the origin of his own music in more detail. "I'm into this thing right now where I'm actually contemplating adding acoustic sounds behind the electric textures," he expounds. "I also want to use space more. On a lot of the early Earth stuff the space is so full... I just like the idea of listening to space, to the silences in between." □

Hex Or Printing In The Infernal Method is released by Southern Lord



Glackens (from top left):  
Dylan Carries, Adrienne Davies, Jones Meekins

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN SHINJUKU



In the second of an occasional series exploring significant musical sites around the globe, Alan Cummings revisits Tokyo's notorious pleasure district in the late 1960s and early 1970s, where guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi, saxophonist Kaoru Abe and writer/promoter Aquirax Aida thrashed out their free music manifestos against a backdrop of sleaze and political unrest. Photography: Yuji Itsumi



**The sound is vast and violent, hanging electric-heavy in the musty, enclosed air like a summer thunderstorm about to burst. Onstage the musicians abuse rather than caress their instruments. The drummer at the heart of the music is a blur of motion like a demon blacksmith at his anvil, rolling insanely hard across the toms and cymbals, dropping deeply resonating bass drum ambients. The bassist sows away in arco mode, the bow flailing back and forth so quickly that you expect tendrils of smoke to rise from the strings. Sitting hunched over his instrument, the guitarist attacks his steel strings with a wooden sword and chains, rippling billowing sheets of churning distortion and whistling feedback from his overdriven amp. The music echoes off the walls of the small room, a continuous series of explosive events that obliterate all signs of melody, harmony and rhythm. The result is pure heat and motion, a thrilling polyphonic racket with force enough to pin the listeners to their seats. Dislodged by the vibrations, tiny flecks of paint flake off the ceiling and drift down on the audience like snow. The year is 1969, the group is Masayuki Takayanagi And New Directions. The place, a tiny jazz coffee shop called Nagisa in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo.**

Shinjuku in the 1960s was home to an unprecedented explosion of countercultural creative energy. This was the period of the economic miracle, when Japan rebounded from the devastation of defeat 20 years before to become the second largest economy in the world. Rising prosperity and a new consumer society were not enough, however, to paper over growing, popular discontent with a corrupt and patrician political system, the Vietnam war and the renewal of a controversial US-Japan security treaty. Throughout 1968 and 1969, radical student sects barricaded university campuses across Japan. It took BOOD not police two days, using water cannons, tear gas and finally hand to hand combat, to break the most famous occupation, at Tokyo University. On occasion, the conflict spilled over into the streets, and Shinjuku became one focus for anti-government demonstrations. During the summer of 1969, the east exit to Shinjuku Station, through which two million people passed every day, played home to anti-war concerts by the so-called 'folk guerrillas'. Attracting first hundreds, then thousands, of supporters, these gatherings were structured around polemical speeches and stirring anti-war songs.

Even before the 60s, Shinjuku was where modernity ran full tilt into the dangerous and disruptive energies of popular culture. Sexual exploitation and crime are deeply rooted in its myths. In the 19th century, Shinjuku was a highway post station notorious for its hordes of unlicensed prostitutes dragging passengers off the road. A contemporary song makes deeply ironic reference to "insei bōru no se moideki, amit the honeys of Shinjuku". The area's looseelan provided the backdrop for what art critic Alexandra Munroe refers to as "the most creative outburst of anarchistic, subversive and riotous tendencies in the history of modern Japanese culture".

The emerging walls of Shinjuku free jazz provided a perfect soundtrack for the avant garde's fusion of the personal and the political. Film director Masao

Adachi used a free jazz soundtrack (released under the title *Isolation*) by drummer Masayuki Togashi and tenorist Mototera Takagi for his 1969 film, *Renzoku Sesashumatsu (Serial Gunman)*. Four years later, Adachi flew to Palestine to join the Japanese Red Army. Such crossovers, hatched late at night over glasses of cheap whiskey in Shinjuku's drinking dens, were very much emblematic of the time. Dramatist/actor Juno Makai's red circus tent, pitched in the grounds of the Hanazono Shrine, was another symbol of Shinjuku's counterculture. Its acrobatic, erotic energies were sometimes stoked by full-on free jazz sets by pianist Yousuke Yamashita's group.

Shinjuku was also ground zero for a nascent folk and rock scene. Street hippy turned acid rock genius JA Seazer vividly recalls the scene at all-night coffee houses like Fugetsudo, the Village Vanguard and the Village Gate during the late 60s. "The Village Gate was my hangout," he said. "I wouldn't listen, I wouldn't talk, just sit there. It was a distant, meditative time when I'd give myself over to the flow of time. Or I'd go to the Vanguard when I wanted to talk – it had a more communal vibe. Late at night it would fill up with street people and wannabe artists. I remember the serial killer Norio Nagayama working there for a while and making me a plate of spaghetti." It was this ad hoc balance between the avant garde and the popular, hedonism and political activism that made late 60s Shinjuku such a creative crucible.

By the 1980s, jazz in Japan was ripe for a change. Accomplished guitarist Masayuki 'Joy' Takayanagi was one of a handful of younger jazz musicians who began to push against the rigid restraints of orthodox swing, bop and modal jazz. Born in 1932 in Tokyo, Takayanagi dropped out of high school aged 16 to become a musician. Three years later, he turned pro. Playing his dues in jazz groups like the Ryosokubo Nishi Quintet, the Daddy Little Combo and Makio Sakama Jokers Quintet, the young guitarist soon gained a reputation for his stunning technique and ability to sight-read any music put in front of him. Though his talents guaranteed him a comfortable career competing behind popular jazz singers, Takayanagi's musical restlessness led him to form a string of short-lived groups. In the early 50s he put together his first New Direction group, a radical (for the time) piano-less quartet that paralleled contemporary US developments by Tedy Charles and Gerry Mulligan. Later, in 1961 with Jazz Academy Quartet, he made his first break from the domination of jazz's rigid four beat to experiment with free tempo playing. The following year Takayanagi, bassist Mido Kanai and pianist Isamu Kageyama went on to form an AACM-style musician's collective called New Century Music Research Workshop. Every Friday, members gathered at a Ginza charoen bar called Gas-Pone, to push the outer limits of jazz creativity. Squares were quickly shown the door – when an established show drummer started playing a conventional rhythm one night, the rest of the musicians trooped off. Today, some of the collective's experiments seem possessed of an overtly cute formalism: stringless guitars, dealing out cards with random chords written on them to structure a tune, pieces based on the rhythm of Morse code, Rorschach inkblot tests used as graphic scores, and so on.

But the spirit of danger and the unexpected was a breath of fresh air on the staid Tokyo jazz scene – at least until the Gin-Pone scene was dispersed after Takayanagi was imprisoned for a drugs offence. By all accounts, drug use was rampant on the Tokyo jazz scene, with some musicians even partaking on the dubious grounds of jazz authenticity. The authorities decided that someone had to be made an example of – and Takayanagi unluckily drew the short straw.

These early experiments properly came to fruition in 1968 and 1969 with the westward shift to Shinjuku. Established jazz coffee shops like Nagisa and Taro, and dedicated venues like Pi-linn and New Jazz Hall provided spaces for experimentally minded jazz musicians whose music was shunned by the more orthodox clubs of the Ginza. A number of important groups took root in this period, such as Yousuke Yamashita's trio, bassist Mototera Yoshizawa's group with free tenor player Mototera Takagi, and units led by drummer Masahiko Sato. Each incorporated freeform ideas and structures to varying degrees. But it was Takayanagi who made the biggest break with jazz convention. Incorporating elegant cutlasses of feedback, his playing on Masayuki Togashi's Quartet's austere and improvisational album *We Now Create*, recorded in May 1969, gave some indication of how far his thinking had progressed.

Takayanagi's collaboration with Togashi could have produced a real musical breakthrough, but tragically the drummer was sidelined by a spinal accident that left him paralysed from the chest down. He returned to playing in late 1971, but had already moved away from free abstraction.

In Togashi's absence, the New Directions trio that Takayanagi put together in August 1969 consisted of bassist Yoshizawa and a younger drummer named Yoshibayashi 'Sebi' Toyozumi. Toyozumi had just returned from two years playing hotel lounges across southeast Asia and European clubs as a member of huckster pop group Mickey Curtis And The Samurais. Having seen Rashied Ali destroy his new wire brushes over the space of just two songs on John Coltrane's 1956 dates in Tokyo, he was now ready to throw himself into free. New Directions rehearsed in a first floor walk-up next door to a Shinjuku tempura restaurant. This room was the Pi-linn's instrument storage locker, but by the end of the year the critic Teruto Soejima, author of *Mohn Fumi Jaz Sh* (*History Of Free Jazz In Japan*), negotiated to run it as a dedicated free jazz venue, which he renamed the New Jazz Hall. It immediately became the premier venue for radical music in Tokyo, presenting such out-there groups as Taj Mahal Travellers and New Music Ensemble, as well as poetry recitals and showings of experimental films by Kenneth Anger, Paul Shantz and young Japanese directors Takakiko Iimura, Seiichi Fuji and the mysteriously named Fifth Psychotherapy.

Throughout that sweltering August, Takayanagi, Yoshibayashi and Toyozumi locked themselves away in this windowless space, thrusting out an entirely new Japanese methodology for improvisation based on Takayanagi's theories about progressive art. During a recent visit to London, Toyozumi, the last surviving member of the original trio, recalls the certainty with which the guitarist presented his new ideas. "He



showed up at the rehearsal and laid down the rules," he says. "Play *fississimo*, never repeat the same phrase and don't listen to what anyone else is doing. That was a staggering concept for us." At another rehearsal, Takayanagi showed up with scores where the bar lines were obliterated by thick black marker, instructing his musicians to "fill up all the space". The need for a decisive break with the past had become clearer than ever to him, if jazz was to escape its past and develop a relationship to its Japanese surroundings.

Recorded with Yoshizwawa and Toyozumi at the Teichiku Kekkon studio on 18 September 1969, Takayanagi's debut album as a leader, *Independence - Treat On Sure Ground*, is the first true classic of Japanese free jazz. The opening track "The Galactic System" demonstrates just how far they had developed over their month of rehearsals. An electric guitar string is pinged with a sour and markedly unevenly resonance. It is left to fade away naturally, its dying whisper replaced with a wavering feedback tone that grows steadily in volume and thickness. Against the slow feedback wave, a sudden, loud percussive crash, urgent staccato rolls across the toms, and the dry rasp of a rattle. A choppy, non-sequential series of chords from the guitar, still mouth-puckeringly bitter, is set against the warmer resonance of an alternately bowed and plucked double bass. Each instrument sounds self-contained, like lunar bodies spinning on their own axes at different tempos, but locked together by unfathomably complex rules of motion. The playing is exploratory and deliberate, technically adept and keenly judged. Its sense of focused concentration is more akin to the European free improvisation of AMM or The Spontaneous Music Ensemble than the violent ecstasies of American free music.

In his sleeve notes, Takayanagi declared plainly that, having spent the previous 18 years exhausting the possibilities of swing, bop and modal playing, he was now "sick of playing jazz within the constraints of 'harmony'", and that notated bar lines could no longer constrain his music. Conventional beauty of tone held no attraction to him, hence his deployment of feedback and even kazoo on one track. Stubbornly unwilling to accept jazz as a predetermined style, he instead returned the focus to pure improvisation – no head melodies, no fixed rhythms, no harmonic structure. In their place, he developed two concepts: gradual projection and mass projection. In his notes for the second New Direction album *Free Form Suite*, he elaborated, "I created two fundamental playing modes, which I stubbornly continue to use and nurture. I refer to inaction and action, or more concretely 'gradual projection' and 'mass projection'. Through mixing and combination, these two modes possess limitless possibilities. To accompany this conceptual evolution, I also developed playing techniques, including the selection, discovery and invention of various new devices to interact with the strings." On *Independence* these include a butter knife and a bass bow, deployed to "prevent the tedium of repetition and the stagnation of change".

The definitions of the two modes are deliberately vague, but from documented performances it appears that Mass Projection involves a dense, speedy and chaotic colouring in of space that destroys the

listener's perception of time, and thus of musical development. Gradual Projection apparently allows a greater amount of silence and thus an appreciation of the spatial arrangement of successive musical events within it.

A track on a compilation called *Guitar Workshop* from January 1970 and a pair of live albums from two months later (*Call In Question* and *Live Independence*, which add tenorist Motoera Takagi to the already devastating sonic palette) demonstrate the increasing role that ear-bleeding volume came to play in Takayanagi's conception. Live they were deafening. Seejings remembers how Yoshizwawa was forced to buy a huge bass amp in order to hear himself over Takayanagi's mazur edge feedback and distortion barages. The critic once asked Takayanagi why the music had to be played so loud. The nonchalance reply: "The greater the amount of information you want to transmit, the more amplification you need." It is tempting to perceive a parallel between musical developments and the civil unrest in the streets of Tokyo in 1969. In a 1981 article, Takayanagi wrote, "Those who live in the present but who harbour no doubts about the structure of authority, about the extreme dangers of our society, including the estrangement of man and nature, those whose anger does not drive them to delve into the essentials, and those whose approach to their art raises no questions, all of these must renounce their status as artists." The parallel between the thrilling polyphonic blur of his music and the questioning of the structures of social control was thus made blindingly clear.

Takayanagi had a famous talent for burning his bridges in public – in Japan's close-knit jazz community, calling a spade a spade was rarely an option. But in the ferocious reviews and thinkpieces he penned for jazz magazines, he had no such qualms. He treated venal club owners and posing no-nothing fans alike to withering broadsides. Nor did he spare his fellow musicians. He got into an acrimonious public dispute with Yamashita after the pianist criticised Takayanagi's new music for lacking swing. Doubting the commitment of other musicians who jumped on the free jazz bandwagon, he criticised them as "a pack of the purely vain and frivolous chasing after money, money, money, just like all the rest, fifty parasites, no better than cockroaches". By April his invective had brought an end to New Directions – Toyozumi and Takagi were stunned to find themselves summarily denounced as "self-preserving betrayers" in a concert poster. It also got him banished from virtually every jazz venue in the capital. A violent disagreement with the New Jazz Hall promoters meant that it too was off-limits.

Against the odds, Takayanagi managed to keep up the momentum with a new circle of collaborators. Primacy among them went to a young poet and jazz critic from Nagoya called Akira (later he preferred the spelling, Aquirax) Aida, and an even younger altoist from Kawasaki called Kaoru Abe.

Recently the subject of a lengthy documentary by Japanese director Shige Aoyama, Aquirax Aida was a forceful presence on the Japanese free jazz scene of the 70s as a critic, producer and promoter. Through several posthumously published books, his ideas

Top: Aquirax Aida (right) with Derek Bailey  
Middle: Kaoru Abe on the bank of Tanagawa River  
Bottom left: Masahiko Topashi (front, in chair), Motoera Yoshizwawa, Sabu Toyozumi, Motoera Takagi  
Bottom right: Motoera Takagi (left), Motoera Yoshizwawa



continue to resonate through today's Japanese underground. His activities as a promoter were extremely influential, first with a group he named Japan Real Jazz Ensemble (JRJE), which brought Kaoru Abe together with older voices like Takayanagi, Yoshihisa and, later, Taj Mahal Travellers leader Takehisa Kosugi. In 1975 Abe founded a second organisation called Hangesta, and succeeded in bringing Steve Lacy, Milford Graves and Derek Bailey to Japan. This encounter with Western free improvisation had a huge and lasting impact.

As a critic, Aida wrote about krautrock, punk and even French art song (he was largely responsible for the reputation that Brigitte Fontaine still has in Japan), but the bulk of his serious criticism was focused on free jazz and improvisation. Towards the end of his life, he published two issues of a magazine called Morgue, which contained the first serious journalism in Japan about European free improvisation. While a student, Aida had studied French literature, when he developed a taste for French critical theorists like Jacques Derrida and Maurice Blanchot, and poetic nihilists like Arthur Rimbaud and Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Aida often quoted the latter on his concert and record productions (two Abe albums bear the Céline titles *Mort A Credit* and *Nord*). Like his literary heroes, Aida's prose could be at once banal, complex and poetically devastating.

Always pointedly subjective, he importantly provided both a sense of independence and a reasoned justification for Japanese free jazz, sometimes couched in an appealing romanticism that verged on mysticism. When talking about Abe, for example, he theorised about "a mode of performance that could explode the moment, thus freeing humanity from the bonds of existence". Aida's dreams were of "reaching an extremity of radicalism and speed beyond the possible". In later years he moved away from the extremity of this position, coming to see a mystical wholeness in improvisation that transcended technique and genre to become an almost religious discipline by which one could live one's life.

If one player in the Japanese underground embodied both of these strands of Aida's jazz theory, it was Kaoru Abe. Japan's handful of free musicians of the early 70s had all come up through the capital's conventional jazz scene. Abe was something else entirely. He had very little to do with jazz – despite his bold declaration that he was the bastard child of Billie Holiday and Eric Dolphy. Entirely self-taught, he had played his first gig in Kawasaki in 1968, aged 19. The following year he was "discovered" by Sebu Toyozumi and trumpeter Itaru Oki, who had heard rumours about the phenomenal young alto player. Toyozumi recalls that Abe's style was already well established before he reached Tokyo – abrasively cold, hard, aggressively pensive, rooted in the physics. His sound seemed to have come out of nowhere. It was sharpened not through the normal discipline of playing with other musicians, but through strength of determination alone. The story circulated that Abe practised on the hard shoulder of a Tokyo expressway, blowing over the constant roar of the traffic. His predilection for rehearsing on the banks of the Tama River once led an agitated boatman to call the cops, convinced that someone was being murdered. In radical exploitation

director Koji Wakamatsu's 1978 film *Jusannin Renzoku Bokura* (Violator Of Love), the same riverbank provided the setting for a fleeting encounter between an enigmatic saxophonist (played by Abe, who also scored the film) and a callous mass-murderer/rapist. Some two decades after the saxophonist's death, Wakamatsu made the Abe bio pic, *Endless Waltz*.

Both hims present, Abe as a crippler, getting no closer to revealing a rationale for his music than the saxophonist's own pronouncements in jazz magazines. When asked about his musical concerns in a 1970 interview for *Savoy Journal*, he replied, "Sound that stops the capacity for judgement. Sound that never decays. Sound that breaks free from every possible image. Sound that comes from both death and birth. Sound that dies. The sound around me. Sound like the symptoms of eternal cold fury. Sound that resists private ownership. Sound that goes insane. Sound that splits over from the cosmos. The sound of sound."

Abe treated speed and extremity as expressive forms in themselves. He had a correspondingly gluttonous appetite for boozes and pills. "I want to become faster than anyone," he once said. In what reads like a manifesto for self-destruction, "Faster than cold, than man alone, than the earth, than Andromeda. Where, where is the crime?"

Soon after his discovery, Abe secured a weekly Friday slot at the New Jazz Hall. Word of mouth spread amazingly quickly, and the speedfreak acceleration and heedless frenzy of his playing rapidly gained him rabid fans; if many musicians were tempted into collaborations with the wunderkind, most came away badly bruised. After slugsfests with Abe, tenorist Motoori Tokagi commented that "that wasn't music", while trumpeter Toshinori Kondo stated "Abe's playing is only about how far he can expand his own ego".

Abe's confrontational attitude meant that for most of his short career he played solo. *Kagayakuwa Nintai* (Glistening Perseverance) and *Mokuyobi No Yoru* (Thursday Night) on PSF catch some of the quicksilver brilliance of his early '70s sound. But the later 10xCD *Live At Goya* series on DIW, recorded in 1978 at a small club in the shadow of the skyscrapers of west Shinjuku, reveal his slow decline. If one performance context suited him, it was in duo with drummers. During one such set with Toyozumi, however, Abe's alto characteristically soared off on its own, leaving the drummer flailing in his wake. When Toyozumi asked him if he even cared that there was someone else on stage, Abe just smiled mischievously in response. Yet in his later years he played frequently with Toyozumi, as documented on albums like *Overhang Party* (ALM) and *Senzen* (Qbico).

One drummer with whom Abe refused to gel, recalls Toyozumi, was the great American free jazz musician Milford Graves. Abe had brought Graves over to Japan to tour and record an album in the summer of 1977, the year before Abe died. A group of Japanese free jazz lumineers was put together to tour with Graves, including Kondo, Takagi, drummer Toshiyuki Tsuchiya and Abe. Abe apparently took an immediate dislike to Graves's huge self-belief and flashy playing. At one concert, he positioned himself in front of Graves's kit and bounced up and down, directing a stream of alto invective straight at him. Graves stopped playing and demanded that Abe be dropped from the tour. After

protracted negotiations, Graves was placated by the promise that Abe wouldn't appear on stage the next night. Abe was indeed absent from the stage, but at the end of the gig he suddenly appeared in the wings. "I'd never heard such an astonishingly heartbreaking tone on the saxophone," recalls Toyozumi. "It gave me goosebumps and I was literally on the verge of tears. I'd never been touched emotionally like that by free jazz either before or since."

There was one musician in Japan who refused to wilt in the face of Abe's onslaught: Masaelye Takayanagi. In May 1970, Aida set up a showdown between the two firebrands. On the surface Abe's "take no prisoners" attitude was highly compatible with Takayanagi's Mass Projection concept, particularly the instruction about not listening to anyone else on stage. The ferocious four and a half hour, no holds barred tussle of their first encounter has entered Japanese free jazz legend. "It was one of the most wonderful, glancing wild nights I have ever known," rhapsodised Aida, "both of them at the absolute highest pitch of voltage, of speed, of violence, four and a half hours without the slightest loss in tension." When Abe's face turned purple, it seemed that the music would go on until one or both dropped dead from exhaustion. Or, as in this case, until the exasperated club owner pulled the plug. An early show at Shinjuku's Koseinenkin Hall, promoted by Aida under the title *Katasteki Kokan – Jazu No Shimbutsu E No Toshia* (Deconstructive Communication – A Projection Towards The Annihilation Of Jazz), was reissued on CD a couple of years ago as *Katasteki Kokan*. The razor edge, top of the need screaming and aggressive phrasing of Abe's alto whips Takayanagi into a frenzy of feedback-laden motion. Even in its edited form it is an exhausting listen. But not all their encounters were so merciless. Gradually Projection (DIW), an unheralded duo from July 1970, provides a glimpse of the less well-documented parts of their set, where Abe also played bass clarinet, shakuhachi or harmonica, and Takayanagi took up his acoustic. Takayanagi and Abe played regularly until October when the duo finally burned itself out. As Aida tells it, Abe constantly baited the older guitarist to take the music further out. It was Takayanagi who balked out first.

Abe's urgent, lonely journey to the end of consciousness continued for just another eight years. He trekked back and forth across the country, playing solo in the handful of jazz coffee shops that would have him, adding piano, guitar and drums to his armoury. He died of a ruptured atherosch on 9 September 1978, after taking 97 tablets of the sedative brownie. His champion Abe himself was not much longer for the world, suddenly collapsing from a fatal cerebral haemorrhage on 12 December the same year. Takayanagi may have balked at the path taken by Abe, but he continued to explore his own radical theories with new line-ups of New Directions. Towards the end of his life, his two favourite playing contexts were the remarkable solo noise guitar style he called Action Direct, and a beautiful Latin guitar ensemble *Logo* (Takayanagi Y Los Potes). He died of liver failure on 23 June 1991. □

Special thanks to Sebu Toyozumi, Hideo Mizumura, Tatsuo Minami, Yuki Iizumi and the Japan Music Support Association for their help with this feature



## THE SINGER NOT THE SONG

In the age of the composer and the singer-songwriter, cover versions are often read as signs of creative bankruptcy. Yet music is an organic process, with new songs being constantly hatched out of old ones, and cover versions have often served as playpen and laboratory for some of music's most radical experiments with existing forms.

Over the next 12 pages, *The Wire's* crack writing squad select 60 cover versions that rattle the state of song. Plus, opposite, Alan Licht investigates his motives for covering other artists' work



## GOING UNDERCOVER

### From reverent paean to total deconstruction, Alan Licht offers a personal view on the motivations that make musicians take on the cover version

**Is the post-Beatles era** of recording entire albums of original material, cover versions take on a heightened significance – they call attention to themselves in a way they didn't when they still comprised half or more of an album. In the post-punk era, some DIY-ers bypassed the tradition of learning to play by learning other people's songs before writing their own. Such a crafty attribute could make covers seem either retro or conservative in comparison to their year zero outlook, but there's much to be said for them. They can be love notes passed from one musician to another; they also reveal the music fan in every performer worth listening to, which makes them a sure fire way to bond with their fans.

There's a few decent ways to go about it: the noble gesture of covering an obscure, worthy song, simultaneously making it your own and bringing it (and sometimes the original performer/writer) to a wider audience (Joan Jett's cover of The Arnos' obscure glam number "I Love Rock 'N' Roll" comes to mind), or mimicing similarities in vocal timbre to acknowledge a kindred spirit (Ron House singing The Electric Eels' "Giganto" with the Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments is a fine example). Covers can also be used as a weapon in a positive way (as sung by Josephine Wiggs, The Breeders' version of Aerosmith's "Lord Of The Flings" did as much to upend 1970s and 80s cock rock as anything in the grunge era; The Pink Fairies' hi-watt rendition of The Ventures' "Walk Don't Run" made good on Jimi Hendrix's promise of never listening to surf music again). Best of all is re-imagining an already great song into another universe with all your might (Patti Smith's visionary retelling of Tempt's "Gloria"; John Coltrane's truncated out excursions on "My Favorite Things"). I have tried to keep all of these in mind as I've done covers both on my own and with various groups over the years.

I got off to an early start in 1990 with Love Child's second release, a 7" single called Love Child Plays Moondog, recorded at home on a four-track. Forced Exposure, still a magazine/fanzine back then, had commissioned us to do it. Neither Love Child bassist Rebecca Dorsi nor myself had heard Moondog, but they sent a tape of Moondog's 2, an album of rounds, and we loved it. It was sharp thinking on their part: like Love Child, the Moondog album featured child-like vocals, and balanced musical sophistry and simplicity. Plus, everything clocked in between one and three minutes, much like our songs did back then. But "All Is Loneliness" was stretched to nearly seven minutes as a psych guitar jam inspired largely by Spaceman 3's five take of The 13th Floor Elevators' "Rollercoaster" – the canon and the 5/8 metre went out the window and we concentrated on the fuzz guitars, with a cheap Casio winding in and out of the mix. For "I Love You", we replaced the odd-

metred bongos with a driving loop made by tapping the mic (there were no drums on the record) in homage to Martin Rev's rhythm box in Suicide, but retained the bass playing the melody and the round between the bass and the vocal, which we stumbled through endearingly. Overdubbing a second fuzz bass line is a more sinister edge than the original, "Be A Hobo" featured Rebecca's sister Naomi on a vocal pitched an octave above hers; I fuzed the round by just setting the delay pedal as I played the melody on guitar. We retitled "Nero's Expedition Up The Nile" as "Oren's Expedition", because we had recorded it and played the tape backwards. I still find that EP charming. Forced Exposure's Byron Coley was so pleased with the results that he envisioned a whole series of Love Child covering modern composers, but it never transpired.

Years later, my next group, a post-rock quartet called Run On who released a couple of albums on Matador, frequently covered Moondog's "Enough About Human Rights". In Coney Island once we did a 30 minute version that comprised an entire set. It started off with all of us playing percussion instruments, building up a rhythm; then two guitars and bongo would riff on the chords, while we split the vocal between Rick Brown, Sue Garner and myself. The tune became kind of an epic journey for us, one that's not really latent in the original, but the odd metre certainly fitted Rick's drum style, and we all liked the song. Run On did a lot of covers, from Nick Drake's "Road" to The Pagans' "Boy Can I Dance Good" to Nina Simone's "Sinner Man", but I think our other peak cover was "Copper Kettle", with Bob Dylan's modified 1970 album *Self-Portrait*, which largely consisted of covers. We stripped away all its overwhelming orchestration and just had Rick sing it with the organ holding a perfect fifth. I've done something similar with The Who's "Baba O'Riley" at solo gigs, just letting the chords echo on the guitar to give it an intimate feel; I've also done a take version where I extend the opening synth passage to 15 minutes by keeping each phrase.

Once, Love Child were asked to contribute a track to a Minutemen tribute compilation album, I envisioned doing a half hour version of "Polarity", by looping the final chord and processing it through a couple of delay pedals. There wasn't room on the record for such a long track, even in the digital era, and Love Child had broken up by that point, so I recorded it for my first solo guitar album, *Sink The Aging Process* (Silkbreeze, 1994). What Makes A Man Start Fires?, the first indie rock album I ever bought, and I liked the idea of doing such a long version, since the group was known for the brevity of their songs. The Minutemen did some great covers themselves, including Steely Dan's "Doctor Wu" and Van Halen's "Ain't Talkin' Bout Love", which proved groundbreaking in testing the boundaries of

acceptable tastes in punk circles, and I wanted to pay back their influence. Surely if it was OK to strip "Doctor Wu" to its barest essentials and cut its length in half, it was OK to skip to the last chord of "Polarity" and put it under the microscope for 20 minutes? Mike Watt, who wrote the song, was mystified by the decidedly Ambient-sounding track, when Thurston Moore played it for him, he supposedly exclaimed, "Thurston, I don't hear my tune!" But he's always told me he liked it.

A year or two later, Will Oldham asked me to open a few shows for him and I wanted to do something that was neither an avant guitar nor a singer-songwriter set. Run On's David Newgarden had played me a CD of holenni contests from North Carolina, so I went about coming up with chord progressions to play behind the recordings of the weird a cappella, howling melodies. As an addendum, I took another a cappella song, "Well" from Captain Beefheart's *Trot Mask Replica*, and developed chord changes behind that, turning it into a punk anthem that ended in a wall of feedback. This can be heard on my 2001 CD *Play Well* (Crank Automotive); one of the holenni contest tunes, "Lonesome Valley", is on The Evan Dando *WTF?* (Corpus Hermeticum, 1997). Opening for Oldham, I reharmonised everything – something I try to apply in a variety of contexts, especially in duo playing with Loren Mazzacane Connors and in many of my solo guitar pieces – and did a kind of inverse karaoke. Combining live instruments with prerecorded tape was something I always liked about *musique concrète*, Phill Niblock's story (reported in *The Wire* 132) about AMM playing over The Beach Boys' "Barbara Ann".

More recently I had the idea to cover Fredric Rzewski's *Coming Together* (Opus One LP, 1973). I broke it into three sections; in the first I followed the score for the vocal text, which came from a letter by Sam Melville, an inmate at Attica. Unlike the William Shatner-like histrionics of vocalist Steve Ben Israel on the 1973 recording, I affected a deliberately robotic voice to echo the number repetition of the lines, eventually giving way to a more sombre tone as the text becomes more poignant. In the second part Mariana Rosenfeld continued to play the piano part, as I e-bowed different notes from the piece's mode over a prerecorded CD of my voice reading precisely layered overlapping lines from the text, in the final part Mariana manipulated a vinyl copy of Rzewski's original Opus One version, while I played the e-bowed notes back at half-speed with a Lane 6 sampler. Mariana more accurately described it as a "meta version" rather than a cover version. The Opus One LP version is a favourite of mine, even with the original recitation; but I felt there was more to be explored, both musically and psychologically, with this brilliant work – which is as good a reason as any for doing a cover. □

## "ANARCHY IN THE UK"

(GOODYOKE RECORDS/ROCKBOTTEN) 1987

The Sex Pistols may have created a global conflagration with their Molotov cocktail of a single, but wherever in the world punk flamed into being, it was anarchy with the dim glow of a legitimate grievance wed with the exultation of a toothache. Exactly what anarchy in the UK means to south Chinese punk rock *Dragon* is unclear, or even how the news got through to them in London early '80s China, way before the state had loosened its steel grip on imported notions of personal expression. Indeed, the Dragons' grasp of the lyric founders before the first line's out, but that can't quell their rising excitement in discovering a voice through punk. Guitarist/anger-finger Liu Gang's jagging approximation of Johnny Rotten's death's head cockle over the overhyped buzz and fusing feedback of his raw electric guitar and Liu's thrashing drums, while Liu's rapidly bowed Chinese violin licks into Steve Jones's jaunty part with true gusto. Like the rest of their French-released 1982 LP *Perform De La Revolution* (Brinkhoff), it sounds like it was recorded at the flood, with no possibility of a second take or overtake. The Plateau created it; The Dragons took it over. And gleefully handed it back to them in pieces. What became of them is unknown. (BN)

## "AUTOBAHN"

(HUTTERTECHNIK/REIDER/SCHULTZ) 1974

Kraftwerk have occasionally been subject to cover versions, and while these are intended as respectful homage, they've generally been underwritten with the expense of Ralf Hütter and co's supposed fey YouTubean megalomaniac tendencies. Big Black's cover of "The Model", for instance, on *Songs About Fucking* (1988), pointedly inverts the number with a kickass factor, while 1992's *Possessed*, The Balanescu Quartet's interpretation of various Kraftwerk numbers, including "Autobahn", humoresquely in its mordantly literal transcription of the original, including the tootie of the car horn at the beginning. The most interesting cover, though, is a decomposed solo guitar meditation by Gary Lucas of The Magic Band that most abundantly reveals and extols the latent, symphonic energies of "Autobahn". Kraftwerk's serene 22-minute hymn of praise to the German motorway system, I first saw Lucas perform "Autobahn" live in 1993, in Berlin – a version appears on *My Raging Factory Tours: Europe 1993* (Envy). It was an aural drenching, a lachrymose, walking, rending, beatless and diaphanous, every guitarlike prismatic and reverberating with melancholy and joy. It was everything Kraftwerk aren't supposed to be, but this time the joins want in Kraftwerk, rather than those who failed to grasp what Kraftwerk are fully, truly, about. (DS)



Gary Lucas

## MARIESE FARTHILL



## "BALLAD OF LUCY JORDAN"

(MEL SILVERSTEIN) 1953

Composed by Mel Silverstein, who also wrote Johnny Cash's novelty hit "I'm a Poor Named Sue", "Lucy Jordan" was originally recorded by the diff US Country pop act Dr Hook. It's difficult to tell what it was about their absurdly matrimonial account of a suburban housewife's suicide that suggested itself as a suitable comeback vehicle for a 1960s society girl turned 70s drug wreck *Marieise Farthill*, but her 1979 single version (from *Driven* English, Island) effectively launched one of the most gratifying second acts in the history of song. Her arrangement strips the original bare, replacing Country pop sashay with a trembling keyboards figure subjected to chill blasts of synthesized strings, which did alienation better than any number of angstridden new wave electronics groups at the time. Rather than wringing sides from the lyrics, Farthill draws on her own painful experiences to empathise with the subject's despair as she looks back from a rooftop at the "old days" of her life. Her voice is raw, weary and only occasionally cracked, as she replays Lucy Jordan's final moments, something getting inside her head while purring some distance between herself and the song. That Farthill went on to record an outstanding English-language interpretation of Sinatra's "Bésame Oh Solider's Wife" came as no surprise after "Lucy Jordan". (BG)

## "BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY TRUE LOVE'S HAIR"

(TRAD. 18TH CENTURY, APPALACHIANAS, 18TH/19TH CENTURY ENGLISH FOLK SONG)

This lovely devotional folk song, first written down by the great Kentucky song collector John Jacob Niles was given a decisive twist in the late 1950s by Nina Simone, who brought out the civil rights era politics contained in celebrating the word "black". Patti Waters's version on *Songs (ESP-Disk)*, recorded in 1965, is something else again. A crude biographical reading that Waters, who is white, is singing about her lover and father of her child, the African American folk singer, Jackie, who was black – only scratches the surface. Waters' epic 13-minute rave on the song, accompanied by mystical steel, Ceed Taylor piano, bass and drums sounds like a kettle slowly rising to a boil. You can hear Albert Ayler, who recommended her to ESP, and his extraordinary take on standards like "Summertime" in Waters' voice, as she moves from an achingly slow, erotic take on the words, individual syllables turning into pulsating drones, to a wordless moan, then an incantatory, stabbing repetition of the word black. It all builds to a crescendo containing not just a proud erotic celebration of her love for a black man, or a political act of solidarity with African American or global blackness, but the fully unleashed feminine power of darkness. Waters becomes black Mother Kali as universal force of embodied divine energy, joyfully tearing apart the known universe and rebuilding it as a space of transfigured freedom into which women like Linda Sharrock, Yoko Ono, Patti Smith and Diana Ross would walk and develop their own voices and styles. And she doesn't even get beyond the first verse, 33 minutes. Imagine what might happen if she sang the whole song. (NBK)

## "BLOWIN' IN THE WIND"

(BOB DYLAN) 1963

Star-crossed Japanese saxophonist Kaoru Abe's bleak, bawdy three-1971 instrumental rendering of Bob Dylan's epochal protest song on *Kaze Ni Rukurete* ('Blown' in The Wind) (Tokuma) is one of the most striking reification jobs ever passed off as a cover version. Also had been blown by the wind for years, huddled in motorway lay-bys, blowing his horn into the face of the oncoming traffic, and his reading of Dylan's track is less a generalised call to arms and more an affirmation of solitary spent, a run of unanswered questions. Versions of the song are dispersed throughout Abe's basic catalogue, but the most focused readings are spread across a three CD series posthumously released by Japanese major Tokuma in 1997. But even here the song exists as little more than fragments, ghostly slips of original DNA separated from the source and linked via huge pavilions of thick, black silence. Abe also never makes any attempt to put them altogether into a cohesive statement. This is the cover version as a collection of the ingredients of the original. Every aspect, from the way lines exude like smoke to their interpretation of the Dylan's original's every question, is intimately keyed to the demands of the song, both musically and personally. (DK)

## Satanopera cultshop



## "CANDY SAYS"

(LOU REED) 1968

Had I a revolver I would reach for it whenever the word *kratki* was employed to justify yet another piece of infantile crap. But I would make an exception for the Osaka sample collage collective *Sataniopera cultshop*, whose demolition of Kylie Minogue, Duran Duran, Lee Hazlewood and, here, The Velvet Underground's "Candy Says" (remixes: *Amorous Gay Ballroom Response*) takes wickedness, normally the most hateful of artistic positions, to new and strange heights after extremes are reached. And then, in 2009, the track is suddenly explained by the collector's Lisa, as all around a tornado of ridiculous loops and out-of-tune tics to undermine her. What makes the track so awesome is how it's never clear what the interpreters actually feel about the song they're performing, which opens up an interesting dialogue with the original version. Indeed, this dialogue – the fact it's a cover about what it means to do a cover – constitutes the track's narrative. It's neither sneeringly irreverent nor caporally deferential, which is just what a good cover should be. (KM)

## "CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION"

(MARC BOLAN) 1970

Righted as some as the beginning of the end of Marc Bolan's songwriting skills, "Children of the Revolution" nonetheless contributed to a reveal of his music in the early 1970s, due to its use in a Levi's ad. In 1989, two ads beat Madison Avenue to the punch: England's Baby Ford crafted an Acid House version that became a European club smash, while New Zealand's *The Dead C* hammeised the tune into a lumbering sludge on *Dead 000*, shortening the title to "Children", as if any hope of revolution were long over. The bludgeoning pound of drummer Robby Yeats and the gravelly crunch of guitarist Bruce Russell turn Bolan's faux Zeppelin stomp into the deadened lurch of a dazed soldier slowly marching home. Even more maiming is Michael Mortley's lethargic ronin, which fattens Bolan's whiny chorus into a stolid slugfest. Somehow, the '80s' unawakening monotone, which bleeds the colour out of Bolan's trippy rainbow and sucks the wind from his plangent sun, results in a concoction for more than 20 years on, the original, Bolan may have emasculated the kids of the '60s rising up to conquer the approaching '70s, but *The Dead C*'s "Children" are more like zombies plodding toward a fate they have no desire to avert. (MFM)

## "COME ON FEET!"

(MELVIN VAN PEELIES) 1971

As the musical centerpiece of *Sweet Screambox's* *Baaklaasse Song*, Melvin Van Peebles' "men on the run" anthem "Come On Feet!" had all the subtlety of a buried Molotov exploding during a Los Angeles riot. Backed by an early incarnation of Earth, Wind And Fire, Van Peebles wailed over, buzzing and howling with galvanic rage. But Mellö's version, which can be found on *The Stone's Throw* (2000), is his debut at the hellion-voiced *Quasimodo*, a blustery and iconic, reinterpreting Van Peebles' crackling funk odyssey as a loping West Coast hipster oddity. It interfaces Mellö/Quasimodo with snippets of Van Peebles' original, which is a mix of African rhythms and links the two with the sound of a hornblower's center, but when Mellö rises, "Whatever happened to the sun/Sure gone run away/Sure blinder than a mad lost soul/Just how can I all day," there's no anxious tightnessness in his voice, just world-weary and sunburned amazement. The skittering beat dogs along at an easy rhythmedo pace while a Hammond organ underscores his trot. Yet despite its emotional detachment, Mellö's "Come On Feet!" successfully revises the original as a wellspring of black cool. The protagonist may be running, but his ineffable grace won't let him break a sweat. (MR)

## "CRY"

(CHURCHILL KOHLMAN) 1991

Johnnie Ray is a forgotten figure in 20th century pop music. I'd guess that most people under the age of 40 don't know who he is, yet his huge success with "Cry" in 1951 was the first warning of a new era of solo pop stars, fun hysteria and a new kind of sexiness. "Cry" is a party anthem, a giddy, yearning message delivered with the kind of exuberant vocal mannerism that led to power ballads and songs like Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Memory". Ray Charles recorded a cover version but it's somewhat less surprising than the 1971 version made by *Alvin Lee*. The Duke Of Rock (Croms Nova Musical, 1978) was composed for vocalist and synthesist by Lee in 1973, and it's one of his few works for synthesizer. A lot of different ideas about memory, simulation, vocal identity, composite images and entertainment are compressed into this piece. As Stuart Marshall wrote in 1978: "Lee intends the work to have many phrasewy corollaries – the tracing of ancestries, hidden family ties and ancient relations... Synthesis not only takes place between successive identities but also between the performers' reminiscences of the vocalist's or each other's chosen identities." What it actually sounds like is a crazy man singing "Cry" in the bath, in a bat cave, on short-wave radio, in a karaoke bar, in outer space. Definitely a "What the...?" cover version. (DT)



The Dead C

## "CIRRUS MINOR"

(ROGER WATERS) 1981

It would be hard to imagine a less likely Hravtski cover than this. The rockabilly quirkiness could be easily lost post-Syr Barrett. Yet it is. The original, recorded on the *Wish You Were Here* to Berlin Schoenreiter's 1969 *Hammer Man*, is a pared-down, exaggeratedly sombre song containing just acoustic guitar, long sustained organ notes, brawling and almost whispered vocals – hardly natural fodder for a hardcore drum 'n' bass and extreme electronics artist in 1990. Flay open with a full minute of birds before instruments enter the lower, and birdsong dominates more than two minutes of the long fadeout. On *Deusus 1998-2000* (Reckenschlagsangverwaltung), Hravtski outdoes Flay's fetish with nearly ten minutes of birdsong leading out of the last verse. In a loving (if somewhat violent) end of the century tribute, the distorted, beats and overdriven his bird recordings almost beyond recognition, taking the idea to its logical conclusion. (DM)

## "DANCE ON"

(PRINCE) 1990

After 1988, when *Lovelyyou* was released, Prince was the king of unhooked posse, his name switch, which appealed into a single track lasting 45 minutes, launched The New Power Generation as both a concept and a cult. It also indicated that, for Prince, love, sex and God could be conflated. Lovessay celebrates this oneness. On "Dance On", he also dances in street prime, war, gangsterism and the shaky account on a nuclear bomb... but his exhortations to "dance on, dance on, dance on" are more in tune with the spiky, elastic funk the musicians lay down. In 1990, American Improvising vocalist Davis Moss successfully captured its heady exuberance when he recorded it for his second solo album, *My Favorite Things* (Intakt, 1991). But his version is not so much an interpretation of the song as a reinvisioning of it. He retains a semblance of the stop-start arrangement, Sheila E's sluttish drum breaks and Prince's jagged guitar solos, but almost nothing else. Moss notes that the song on *My Favorite Things* ends with one exception: "arranged and performed only by me, I have never heard it performed before". In lieu of Prince's lyrics he improvises gibberish of suitable phrase lengths (as seen from a single cry of "I can't stand it when you do that to me, yeah!"). This wilyseed, beady, avant-garde reworking of one of Prince's squashed, homeostatic funk anthems is fun, fun, fun, and it perfectly complements Tom Jones's more reverential, testosterone-drenched take of another Prince song, "Kiss". (BMR)



Daanmoto

## "DANCING IN THE STREET"

(STEVENSON/WHITEHORN/HUNTER) 1964

The Motown original of "Dancing in the Street" is ostensibly one of post-war's most wholesome and exuberant moments, a capitalistic trade-off between work and play, as emphasized by the proto film of Martha Reeves & The Vandellas capering around the floor of a Detroit laundry. But as the song's subversive intent soon surfaced – in 1967, it became the unofficial theme song for the Detroit rebels, hearing it on the radio a year earlier, bassist Phil Lesh sensed it could serve The Grateful Dead's more utopian purposes as a "vehicle for stretcher" cut and jammer" hand on two chord Cobain-style". On their 1970 version, which appears on *Fallout From The PNL Zone* (Sustained Dead), he and The Dead take it for a long ride around the Santa Monica of the mind, blaring out and inventing an insurrectionary spirit into America's avenues and boulevards. Guitarist/composer **Fred Frith's** single version of "Dancing In The Streets" is more extreme still, inkled on his 1980 album *Gravity* (RCA), a celebration of the revolutionary power of dance, he grabs the song and practically fragments it to his own ends. Beneath the sarcastically joyously spangly melody like he plucks out on his guitar are scrunched layers of joy and anguish; in part composed of sampled sheets of Iranian demonstrators celebrating the capture of American hostage. Outrage? It may be even to imply political solidarity with Iranian fundamentalists, but Frith's a deft conversion of The Sound Of Young America into an anti-American reproach is stunningly impressive. (DK)

## "GOLD STAR"

(GARLAND/HINTZER) 1966

On daygloated (Org.) plungeraphia composer **John Oswald's** 1993 double disc long "cover" of the Grateful Dead's most spacebound vehicle plundered and spliced together more than four decades of live Dead versions into one definitive, maximalist monumen. Oswald creates orchestrated fireworkers that blow into slow smears of vocals and feedback patterns that bleed into slow smears of vocals and supernaturally compressed juntas. The first – straighter – part, "Transcend Axi," relies mainly on overlap techniques, which permit Oswald to fly in various soundboard recordings and patch them together in a variety of vertical and horizontal harmonies. For all its reiteration as a transgressive art vendal, much of Oswald's work is born of faninch enthusiasm, and this is especially evident when he builds a "proper" feedback coda onto the end of the track, claiming he always left the band of feedback that signalled the end of the landmark *Live Dead* version sounded too much like a mistake. Part two, "Mirror Ashes," is considerably more doused, with swarms of time-altered sound effectively working as huge brackets enveloping ever more compacted takes. It's a fantastically pyrotechnic listen but its most revelatory aspect is how The Dead's own live reading still eclipses this huge Arkestral reworking. (DK)

## "DEATH DON'T HAVE NO MERCY"

(REVEREND GARY DAVIS) 1946

The Grateful Dead first introduced the Reverend Gary Davis's spiritual to the world. A collection of parts of pentaphones attached to a blues form in new zones of the human heart. Outside Of The Dead, it's hard to think of anyone else besides Matthew Velenote and Eniko Dörö who have done so much to reflect that form in series of psychodelically charged, freely improvised sound. The **MVAE** version of "Death Don't Have No Mercy" on *Lunar Blues* (Child Of Monsters/GDR, 2004) is more emotionally blotted than even The Dead's reading, with Dörö's frenz, almost monotone vocal sounding like a shellshocked witness to Death's inexorable progress across the land. Locking a rhythmic anchor, Valentine's single note runs flash in the air like dead stars, and the timing, feels as organic as the pulse of his blood, as he generates trails of serpentine notes that dissolve into buckets of wheezing analogue reverber. *Lunar Blues* featured some of MVAE's most radical traditional re-stylings, but there was also a special "Digital 7B" take released alongside the album as part of the duo's *Heroic* series: This even more extended freedom version further blurs the lines, with an orbit on instrumental themisms from "Death" slowly segueing into "Death, Won't You Be Kind," an instrumental postscript that explodes in a warm wash of modal electronics. (DK)

Nina Simone



## "THE DESPERATE ONES"

(GAUCIUS BREIL) 1969

While the musical sensibilities of both Jacques Brel and Nina Simone have had a fair share of variation, they are arguably at their best when they're simplest. And you don't get much more unadorned than this: Simone's voice and piano interpretation of Brel's "Les Désespérés" (Nina Simone And Piano, RCA, 1969) is as naked as a song about suicide should be. Written soon after the death of Brel's mother, the song has an extraordinary focus on silence – the desperate ones are forever walking, "without a sound", even disappearing, one by one, beneath the river's surface soundlessly – and every nuance of Simone's version understands this. Her voice cracks and whispers; there's a suffocating dryness that results, in another word, the whining tones of TS Eliot's "Hollow Men". Brel uses the image of the unchanging river as an accusation against the world's indifference to individual suffering, while Simone injects a funerally jaunty vocal riff. But there's nothing to celebrate here, other than the fact that Brel and Simone recognised, for whatever personal reasons, the ghouls in their midst. (LO)

## "DEVIL GOT MY WOMAN"

(IRVING JAMES) 1951

Blues might be the most worn-out (through overuse and abuse), had to hear fresh music on the planet, but John Skip James's original "Devil" – just his pittoresque keening voice and acoustic guitar – still cuts right through to your marrow. The lyrics surpasses *Gasoline Alley's* "Love Like Anthrax" with its anti-romantic imagery of love as toxic affliction, a disease of the spirit (James loves it so toxic, a disease of the soul). To resist, to switch off, to switch on his lovesick thoughts for a while, but "my mind sharts a-wamblin like a wild goose from my seat". Most singers would flinch from taking on this unkindest task. But John Martyn, reworking (and reworking) it, "I'd never seen The Devil" (on *Selfish*, 1973), not only steals the original's intimacy, he enriches and expands it, stretching its form to the limit. It starts as a seething plunge, a dive into seductive but treacherous waters. Rolling with congas and clavinet, the group's singing aquafunk wallops anything contemporaneous by Sly Stone or Prince. Martyn moves through the music like a shark. Lyric shards come into focus now and then – "so much evil", "stole her from my best friend... know he'll get lucky ahead her back" – but mostly Martyn's manky rasp licks your head like this black gas of amorous malevolence. Then suddenly the *Bohemian Rhapsody* dissipates: "ocean as killing floor" transforms into a barren reef-cooperated reef. Denny Thompson's bass injects pure intransigent calm, keyboards tickler and undulate like anemones, Martyn's headleapin fingerpicking spirals in telephoned loops of mung rapture. Sensically traversing the distance from the Mississippi, never work camp in which the young James took up. Miss Davis' "A Sweet May," "I'd Rather Be Devil" and "I'm an Antisocial" also take the colour of "ocean in this world" dissolution, but also of "teach to the world" blues. The two halves of Martyn's dookey remake also correspond to a battle in the singer's soul – between monster and water baby, danger and grace. (SR)

## "DRY BONES IN THE VALLEY"

(JOHN FAHEY) 1975

"Dry Bones In The Valley" originally appeared on John Fahey's 1975 album *Old Reckoned Love*. Though he worked with orchestral players on much of the album, adding a jubilous tone to the compositions, "Dry Bones" closes the set with Fahey playing alone, sending signals out from ringing open strings. Jim O'Rourke and David Grubbs, recording as **Gastr Del Sol**, took "Dry Bones In The Valley" at its word (the title was drawn from the lyrics to a Beowulf Lamsfurd song) and encased it in suspenseful melodies, slowing it to a peaceful plod and appending it with a pulsing, hypnotic denouement that's as much a call to God as it is a call to the Devil. Tony Conrad plays on the recording. *Legends And Lore: Drag City*, 1996) and his presence serves as a key recognition of various kinds of elemental Americana, alternately souring recurred melancholy in his own thick chords of violin, and the open-string resonance in Fahey's composition. Though O'Rourke's guitar moves at a snail's pace, there's palpable joy in their rendition, the "dry bones" reinvigorated through avant-garde tact. Much more than a dream exercise, itly combining two of Grubbs's and O'Rourke's key influences, *Gastr Del Sol's* "Dry Bones" plays as a healer strategy with great success. It retroactively imagines a scenario in which two key American artists of the late 20th century (Fahey, Conrad) wrote on the same page, in the same room. (JD)

## "EIGHT MILES HIGH"

(CLARK/CROSBY/MCGUIRE/HUNTER) 1966

For all of the angular, rhythmic rubs of early *Huskerville*, Bob Mould like the *Reverend*, *Matthew Sweet* and *Zen Arcade*, the group were always more power pop than power trio, with the result that much of their catalogue has long since surrendered itself to the purgatory of college radio. But their denouement version of The Byrds' 1966 drug mantra "Eight Miles High" provides a still tantalizing glimpse of what 1980s US hardcore might have become had it been fully alchemized by psychotronics and post-John Coltrane tongue. Guitarist/vocalist Bob Mould resounds Roger McGuinn's modal guitar runs for cheap fuzz and he slams every line as his impatience gets the better of him, more intent on instant punk satori than the necessities of any associated ritual. The group take the song at double speed, its velocity forcing Mould to give up properly articulating the lyrics. By the time they make it to the bridge he has almost dispensed with words altogether. As he caves into screams and screens of sound, the group reach escape velocity, and for a beautifully brief instant they play as if they were liberated from all earthly constraints, performing a subterranean gust of wind by the seat of their dreams. It's a brief flash. *Huskerville* never really followed up on this breakthrough, but as a glimpse of a possible guitar-based future for eccentric haran sounds, it still sounds pretty. (DK)



MVAE

## "EINHEITSFRONTEID" / "SONG OF THE UNITED FRONT"

(BERTHOLD BRECHT 1934)

Berthold Brecht and Hanns Eisler's "Einhheitsfrontid" was written to unify workers in the face of fascist threat and capitalist oppression. Brecht's words proclaimed, "The freedom of workers/Comes only at the worker's hand." Their comrade Ernst Busch originally recorded it for the Spanish Republican cause in the 1930s (Der Rote Ophöuse, Barbaressa); and again in 1962 for the East German Aurora series drawing a socialist songmap of the 20th century (An Die Nachgeborenen, Barbaressa CD). The latter conveys its communicative priorities, with Busch pritching his crisp tenor in catchy soubrette over the arrangement's march-like regularity, assisted by a comradely chorus. When **Charlie Haden** revisits the song (Lieutenant Music Orchestra, Impulse!), the coordinating function of the marching element takes the foreground. For **Peter Brötzmann/Peter Van Hove/Hans Böckler** (1971), the song's rhythmic energy and political charge that already migrates into the circus tent and places Harpo Marx at the head of the parade. In place of the piano's chugging bass chords on the Busch interpretation, Van Hove trills and embellishes; after running through the melody with a guttural growl, screeching Brötzmann chases Böckler into an exultant release of anarchic energies, as the trio work their way to freedom in a fabulous neo-Left synthesis of passion and intensity. (JC)

Lo! Coxhill



## "EMBRACEABLE YOU"

(GEORGE GERSHWIN 1932)

The old Gershwin warhorse "Embraceable You" has been covered by everyone from Omrie Coleman to Judy Collins. Having been played to death by anyone who knows what end of a set goes in the mouth, I would like to thank **Lo! Coxhill** to the man in the white shirt, the boy who plays the keyboard, Vernon Weston's frosty keyboard — and reduce his audience to helpless infants, on the essential Coxhill retrospective: **Spectral Square** (Barbarens). The straighter Coxhill (Haus, the humor it gets, Suddenly sex and stereo weave into a headlong sizzle through Charlie Parker's "Quasimodo"). Perfectly combining Coxhill's sex prowess with his effortless sense of humor, it is at once technically spanking and anarchically comic. It makes you wonder how jazz ever got associated with high seriousness. (OB)

## "FAITH HEALER"

(HARRY WAXMAN/NAOMI 1914)

The original version of "The Faith Healer" appeared on The Sensational Alex Harvey Band's second album, *Heist* (1974), and in the hands of frontman Harvey it became a springboard for some of his most eccentric rock theatrics, laying his hands on the audience and channeling pure electricity in a way that transformed him into a virtual lightning rod for both the group and the crowd's affirmative pro-rock energies. Recorded as "Hate Fest" for his 1988 live album *Rite (Jungle)*, Jim Thirlwell as **Fortress Comptus** works negative genvaux with Harvey's original over the industrial percussion and heroic power chording of a group that included three ex-Steers. The mix foregrounds Thirlwell's snake of salesman vocal, this "Jim Jones does Vegas" act as seductive as it is shrill-crowding. Thirlwell in **Fortress in Excelente Comptus** returned to "Faith Healer" in 1990 (Cigars Box set, Matz (Big Cat)). This time it sounds positively exotic, with a more crossbreeding mix that includes a dash of the blues, a dash of the orientalism of Harvey's original, while highlighting and tempering the cursive, euphoric powers of rock as mercilessly as anything by Leibach. The guitar solo has to be heard to be believed, a writhing-in-tongues moment that could be the sound of serpents coiled in the bellies of cursed unbelievers. (DK)

## "HALLELUJAH, I'M A BUM"

(MILTON CLOD 1893/1908)

On first hearing, "Hallelujah, I'm A Bum" sounds like an irreverent celebration of the hobo life. But George Orwell aside, few ever end up down and out by choice, and the song is a bitter condemnation of the political and economic forces that made the itinerant existence of the migrant worker the only "style option" available to whole swathes of working class Americans at the turn of the 20th century. The song is closely associated with the bawlers. One Big Union, the International Workers of the World, was the most well-known as the Wobblies, Workers' Alliance in The USA, and the Wobblies distanced the BWW from other left wing US political organisations of the time, which were dominated by intellectuals, characterising it as "vehicle of the outsiders, the foreign born, unskilled, blacks, Asians, romantics of every stripe." The Wobblies movement, which was driven on by an army of hobo philosophers, spawned a huge number of grass roots songwriters, poets, artists and pamphleteers, and in his study of the most celebrated Wobbly songwriter of them all, Joe Hill, *The IWW & The Making Of A Revolutionary Working Class Counterculture*, Franklin Rosemont localised the movement's poetic outpourings in a tradition of vernacular surrealism that linked it to the liberating philosophies of Andre Breton and Philippe Souza, and whilst in turn provided the inspiration for a ragged but unbroken continuum of subcultures, from the Beats to the New Weird America. This tradition of politicised outdoor poetical variants the version of the song recorded by **Billie Holiday** in 1934, which was written by a woman whose urban constituency in the sub-hobie undergrounds, where a self-determining DIY aesthetic sits up against the intersection theologies of mess and improvisation, and the unmediated raw materials of traditional songforms. You'll find it on a recently issued CD titled *By The Mountains & Sea*, but the fidelity of the recording is so degraded it sounds like it was made during the time when the Wobblies were in their prime, with Keijo cast as a fresh-faced arrival in the New World, eager to integrate by delivering his own, heavily accented versions of the local folklores of the day, you might wonder at the significance of a Finnish miascan recording, such a song 100 years after the fact, but that would be to ignore the present day reality that the migrant worker remains capitalism's labour unit of choice. Also, pace the Wobblies' outmoded, inclusive membership policy, both Joe Hill and the movement's greatest veritable saint, the hobo writer *Ebenee Slims*, were of Scandinavian descent; Hill was Swedish, while Slim was a Finn, whose given name, witness of the New Weird America should note, was Modest Valentine Huittu. This stuff goes deeper than you think. (Th)

Patti Smith



## "HEY JOE"

(WILLIAM ROBERTS 1965)

"Hey Joe, where you going with that gun in your hand?" Thus opens arguably the most widely covered song of the 20th century. *Like "Hey Joe,"* *the title track* (1966) to the first album with a new guitarist and his brand spankin' new fuzz box to record a song that had already bombed once for *1965*. But with its punchy guitar jangle smothered in fuzztone, this new version became *The Leaves'* only hit. It was also powerful enough to implant "Hey Joe" in the consciousness of every garage band to ever plug into an amp throughout the late 60s. Since then, more than 1000 artists have recorded the song, and countless bar bands have played it into the ground. Its longevity is the result of its incredible flexibility, as the simple and instantly recognisable melody adapts easily to chord changes, stylistic concords, variable instrumentation and different tempos. The lyrics too have been subject to radical rewrites and edits, but the content has mostly remained the same: our anti-hero Joe walks a gun upon his unholy garments and flees that punishment awaiting him. Yet, it's a gruesomely violent song and its misogyny should not be taken lightly, as the protagonist is a "hellion" who "wants to see" a woman "ripped open" of such a prudish and saintly part of women. Yet it somehow escaped into the countercultural heterotopianism of the 60s, where dashing, social norms and outspoken displays of striking it to *The Man* were badges of honour. The obnoxious misogyny is not the only controversy to "Hey Joe." Its original authorship has long been a point of contention, but by now it doesn't really matter who wrote it (it is usually attributed to Billy Roberts). "Hey Joe" has evolved into the rock equivalent of a traditional hymn, welcoming additional flourishes, personal styles and willful experimentation.

Through the late 60s, *The Leaves'* version remained the template for most covers, if *The Music Machine, Love and Fever* all stayed true to *The Leaves*, Japan's *The Golden Cups* responded to it in 1968 with an explosive psychadelic take, driven by a relentless baseline. Midway though, they nurture the song's structure with a desecrated biker attack of fuzzed out effects and reverberating vocal harmonies, leaving *Adding More Mirth* delirium by almost four decades.

Of course, the most famous 60s version is by **Jimi Hendrix**, who borrowed its half-speed blues progression from *Tin Rose* and groundshed it with a rhythmic swagger, trumped only by his leads and solos. As good as it is, the cult of personality around Hendrix has hampered the song's evolution. Look no further than **Ice-T's** perfunctory mimesis of "Hey Joe" on his brief excursion into rock hard rock *Cost of Living* (1992). Fortunately, the true apostles of rock's revolutionary spirit have understood the song as a malleable form to be manipulated to their own agendas. **Patti Smith** is the only major figure to tear it apart. Recorded in 1974 as the B side to *The Factory* single, her version revises the history of Patti Hearst and her kidnapping by the Symbionese Liberation Army into the character of Joe, as the woman with a gun in her hand. Smith's rant rejects any comforting notions about the "good" and "bad" in society, and in doing so, appears to be the antithesis of her order, should be held accountable for her actions. In a similar out of history transposition, **Nick Cave** records "Hey Joe" on his 1986 covers act, *Kicking Against The Pricks*, Matz as a grim cautionary tale of man's propensity of extreme violence. With his arrangement's ominous descent into a tense swarm of organs and guitars, Cave's stirring sermon remains the most chilling version to date. (For a list of the 1000 plus versions of "Hey Joe", check out [www.heyojoe.org/](http://www.heyojoe.org/).) (JM)

## "HONKY TONK WOMEN"

(MICK JAGGER/CHARLES 1969)

However interestingly naughty it may have seemed at the time, The Rolling Stones' 1969 ode to loose women sounds immensely today. Difficult to imagine even Sir Mick Jagger singing the preening, forced decadence of a line like "I had a divorce in New Orleans" with a straight face. From top-pop minister **Patrol Officer** to a straight-faced, asexual, pretentious bore, completely by earnestly doing an instrumental cover, it's hard to know for sure whether this remake (actually retitled "Petenera", a reference to the Spanish style in which it is performed) is a genuine tribute to the original romance à la *Comedade*, or an attempt to take the piss out of The Stones' macho posturing, but I have no problem reading it as the latter, given *Comedade's* shaky and rather unmasculine arrangement and performance. Toy panos, boomy kiddy drums, and halting, badly intoned plastic guitar fills are surely not what the Glitter Twins had in mind when they set this baby down on paper. (DM)

## "I CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION"

(MICK JAGGER/CHARLES 1965)

A classic early example of both consumer alienation and country boy cool, how many could identify with the tailspin-champagne-guitarist of 1965? The Stones' "Satisfaction" has had a continuing appeal for the sweet guitar Party this has so to do with the status of The Stones as rock icons, partly with the minute allure of the song itself. "Satisfaction" offers a sharply fizzy riff, a stomping rhythm and a self-obessed lyric. The irrepressible propulsion of The Stones' original was fuelled by a definite tension between the elements, but covers have tended either to emphasise one single strand. When New York's *Telefonix* took on the song on their final tour in 1978 (the *Blow Up*, ROR), the original's garage energy proved highly resilient to their angular attack. The only way Tim Verlaine can find into the song is through the iron-fing'ed fuzz sound of Heath Richards' iconic riff, which he manipulates and extends into a solo sharp enough to slice through flesh and bone. From the same year, *Devo*'s memetic-punk version (9) Are We Not Men? A We Are Devos, Virgin, 1978) plays assembly-line games with the original's pulse, the two guitars in constant competition, the music always strung on a characteristic tangle of robotics, and herring-jelly rhythms exquisitely designed to short out any Dionysian pleasure. Mark Mothersbaugh pointedly depicted it as a "stupid perpetual-motion machine clanking around the room"; a vision of the obsolescence of rock in the new machine age.

But for all the music's denial of the pleasure principle, the monotone yelp of the vocals never fails to raise a wry smile. Over in Europe in 1988, *Blutengel*'s *Neubau* & *Sensitives* (Jaggers covered it as "Art in the Total State" in 1971) "I'm Your Total反映" (1988) on the various artists compilation, *Alte Dicke Pausen* (Monogram/Zenith CD), which pungently works a Josef Goebbels quote into the equation. Once again the riff gets sacrificed on the altar of blank nihilism, while the rhythms crawl beneath a queasy weave of honking sax, neutral vocals and squeaking electronics. Satisfaction never seemed further away. More recently *Kelji Hanno* (No 1 covers unit Athyo) worked his own brand of alchemy on the DNA of "Satisfaction" (Live, PSE, 2000). Hanno's covers frequently stem from a dissatisfaction with the original. Here he worries away at the tension between Jagger and Richards' balance of conflicting elements, choosing to meld them together in the pursuit of a palpable musical dissatisfaction. Hanno's guitar riffs an entirely different riff throughout, its amplitude and endless cycle stubbornly refusing to get with the rhythm and generate powerful strands of feedback over a grinding, distorted guitar. The cover is a bit of a reprobate and out there from the comfort of the mainstream formula. In Japan, if *Neubau*'s and *Devo*'s versions were concerned with expressing a broader social dissatisfaction, Hanno's turns the song back in on itself, the music commenting on the music. (AC)

## "I GOT A RIGHT!"

(IGGY POP 1997)

The Meat Puppets were a trio of psychobanging Grateful Dead fans from the Arizona desert who, in the early 1980s, impacted with the coiled ball of negative energy that was the US Hardcore scene and went into supernova. Taped into the essential that produced their 1981 debut album, but not released for another 17 years, their version of The Stooges' "I Got A Right" sounds like the end point of rock. The original, recorded in 1977, was an adrenal-fuelled "fuck you" directed at anyone who'd written off Iggy Pop as just another street-guitarist-clubber. The cover is a bit of a reprobate and out there from the comfort of the mainstream formula. In the Meat Puppets' version, the dumb exorcism in Iggy's lyrics is piloted and rendered as one long road howl, while the original riff blurs at the edges thanks to the group's unique approach to rock rhythm, which heard it as an ominous number, the equivalent of an army of stampeding cattle hurtling past you at breakneck speed. If you haven't heard the original, it might be hard to find any sense of form in this accelerated transmission of signal into noise. At the centre of the track is Chris Reznor's guitar solo, which in the aesthetically repressive climate of US Hardcore was as radical a statement as Louis Armstrong's trumpet break on "Right Like That". Had been 60 years earlier in New Orleans. Picking up where Wayne Kramer's contentious solo on The MC5's original 1968 version of "Looking At You" left off, Reznor takes the raw material of an electric guitar feeding back at maximum volume and scatters it into a maddening patchwork, a faltering across bar lines, dithering between home and best, dreamlike Third Eye extensions. In the midst of noisified mirth, it's one of those moments in music when you give thanks to the gods for bequeathing us the resource of electricity. (TJ)



Devo



The Sirens

## "I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE"

(STRONG/WHITEHEAD 1967)

This recording is one of the high points of the collaboration between *The Sirens* and Dennis Howell but it didn't make the cut for their uneven Island debut album, *Cut*, creeping out on a B side to the 1979 single, "Typical Girls" (1981). There's nothing strange about giving Marvin Gaye's iconic midtempo megalomania a female voice. Gladys Knight's interpretation, one of four recorded by various soul acts, was recorded before the single, but all, *The Sirens* and *Cut* (1981, Island/EMI Gaye, "I know a man who's accustomed to cry," sings Ari Up, while unless the hit version's gender positions unhooked. Whatever the sexual start, the song's parodic edge is amplified: tearay is hard indeed to bear, Up's modified lyric emphasises the point: "Run and hide from what you hear?" Musically, the main link is between Teena Politis's big, dread bassline, tougher by far than the organ-driven sheen of Gaye's tracking track, and an Up's remarkable vocal performance. The bass part gives the song low-end, sound system thump, while Up floats above it, stretching the languid pain of Gaye's reading into a more urgent emotional space. There's not a line that she doesn't give a meaningful twist with her trills, glissos and whispers. Soarally, Sirens, semi-skanking bodies toots away at the song's smoothes, Howell throws in faintful atmospherics and the hammered bassline vocals provide amateur witness. From a demolition job, the *Sirens*' take on an overfamiliar song gives it oxygen, rescuing it from the dead air of the pop stratosphere. (WM)

## "I'M SIXTEEN"

(ROS SIREY SOTHEA 1998)

The original is the fierce grand of a 1960s Cambodian dacephor symphony, a scowl of bouldered teen fury flung out by Ros Serey Sothea, the Queen of Khmer pop. "My year 16 – no women in the world. What is when?" The sweethearts of it purrles on. "It's a musical car crash between Southeast Asian yodeling vuvuz and Western guitar pop, and Matt Dillon used it on the soundtrack of his 2003 film *City Of Ghosts*. The cover (a *Dengue Fever*, Web Of Memory, 2003) is a pumped up homage to this vanished Cambodia, sweet away by Khmer Rouge genocidal lunacy in the 1970s. Los Angeles group *Dengue Fever* started playing Cambodian pop after guitarist Zee Hotzam and his brother Ethan spent their tour money on cassettes in local markets. Zee's chest aches with the alienating glamour Khmer vocal star Chhun Namol, ensures the group's visual impact, and their 2003 debut album contains no less than seven covers of Ros Serey Sothea songs. (WM)

## "FARRIVE" ("I'M COMING")

(JACQUES BREL 1964)

Mark Almond's interpretation (Jacques, Some (Bizzare, 1988) of Jacques Brel's paean to death, "Farrive", is not a companion piece to an earlier song, "Mother Fiz", although the double entendre suggested by the title could not be lost in a can dedicated in equal measure to Elegies and Thematics. If David Bowie and Scott Walker were responsible for introducing Almond's generation to the Belgian songwriter, it was Almond who really set about reinterpreting Brel in an English language sentence. In this, he was aided slightly by poet Paul Mulcahy's new translations, who got to the heart of the song – you can almost hear the muffled, muffled, muffled, muffled of the opening, often repeated, first line are the French flower of moaning – with a simplicity that works. Longingly bent on keyboards and strings, with a few contractions for added flavour (he was just out of his flannelette period), Almond's performance has a different drama to that indicated by the swelling themes of Brel's ornate orchestration. At 90 seconds slower than Brel's recording, his cover has an inevitability that never descends to the funeral, instead, it's a march of time, in time, a masterpiece of detail, made poignant by the breaks in his voice. (LG)

**"KING TUBBY MEETS THE ROCKERS UPTOWN"**

(HORACE SWAMY) 1975

At any one time in regular there are versions galore of the popular tunes of the day. A rhythm may come back into vogue and disappear again for years. Peculiarly some are so distinctive or revised, they become strangely "hailed in time". "King Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown" was derived from a fine single called "Baby I Love You So", produced by Augustus Pablo on his Rockers label for house singer Jackie Miller. Tubby used the track to create the cornerstone of modern dub. Remnants of vocal were pulled and stretched, the urgent, juddering bass line was emphasized as echo and reverb were applied to make the vocal even more affecting than the original. Coltrane revisited the song for 440 on the early 1980s, but the tune is still electrically charged. Beyond its musicality, the original's sense of club came not from new young challenger but the man who repeated was there at the creation of both ska and reggae, **Errol Ranglin**, on his *Below The Baseline* (Island Jamaica Jazz, 1996). Session guitarist Ranglin was more at home in New York jazz clubs than Kingston studios. Retaining a straight bassline throughout, thereby immediately identifying the track, Ranglin and softshoe pianist Monty Alexander take it back home to an early 80s. Three Sounds vibe stayin there for the duration with the guitarist gently improvising the theme bollard-style with his trademark runs. Out of dub's ghetto emerges a new jazz standard, just as remarkable as John Coltrane's re-birth of "My Favorite Things" and Albert Ayler's re-appropriation of "Going Home". (SB)

**"LOLA"**

(RAY DAVIS) 1975

Ray Davies' "Lola" is associated with the King's flagging late 80s career, presenting a tableau of gender confusion in a Soho club. Lola's transvestism never quite openly declared thanks to Davies's textual ambiguity. What surprises about the original version is the distance between the uncertainty of the protagonist as manifested through the lyrics, and the song's surefooted structure. Covered by The Raincoats on their self-titled debut album (Rough Trade, 1990), the gender confusion multiples as Gina Birch and Anna Da Silva decimal the lyrics without changing gender pronouns. More importantly, the group play as though they are manifesting the main character's uncertainties and indecisions. Prolive Drive's drumming regularly threatens to overtake the song, the guitars chime and spit like the alarms and serrated knives, and at several points, the song comes close to collapse. It can be easy to ignore the subtleties and the narrative twists in Davies's original, but with The Raincoats at the helm, the performance finally reveals the protagonist's state of mind. (JD)



Errol Ranglin

**"LAZYBONES"**

(CARL MICHIEL MERCIER) 1983

The great songwriter Hoagy Carmichael was born in the dying weeks of the 19th century, "Lazybones", his supremely feedback grumble about the sluggard who neglects his job, commiss, taxes and fishing rod in favour of "sleepin' in the shade", is of course a heavy-lidded paean of praise for the feeling it's that perfectly embodies its subject. 106 years after Carmichael's birth, Deeku perform Yoko Nawa6 uses the song to play a game with distance and perspective, similar to her album of ska covers where she has taken to across a table. At times all we hear are puffs of breath and commands - most of the song has vanished into digital thin air. But gradually a full version emerges from the far distance, concluding in a sunlit close-out. It's on Nawa6's Songbook (Sonicore, 2006), a provocative firmly original take on a covers album that diges up old Japanese baseball songs, Chopin piano and nursery rhymes for a series of playful but always focused experiments. (CB)

**"LISTEN, THE SNOW IS FALLING"**

(YOKO ONO) 1971

Beginning its life as a skogsgen nursery rhyme entitled "Snow is Falling All The Time" sung into a hiss-swamped tape recorder, later released on a flexi disc included with the seventh issue of British art magazine *After You Drop*'s "Listen, The Snow is Falling", is one of her most affecting songs. Appearing as a B-side to "Love You Like a Love Song" (1971), "Snow (We're On Our Way)", Ono chose back from the vocal isolation of her more outré performances to sing a two-minute hymn whose intimacy and warmth is almost lost inside quiet period production. When *Galaxy 500* reinterpreted it on their 1990 album *This Is Our Music* (Pykodisc), they unravelled Ono's original, extrapolating upon the song's happy-sad tenor. Stretching to eight minutes, their version opens with Naoko Ying singing the song's simple lyrics over glassy cellofion guitars. As her voice disappears, the recording opens up, with Denon Krakowski's drums channelling the manic precision of Krautrock and the loose-limbed energy of Robert Wyatt, as guitarist Dean Wareham works the snakes, spilling gushes of notes from six strings. By pulling hard at the very fabric of the song, *Galaxy 500* unshack the freedom at the heart of one Ono's most deceptively simple gestures. (JD)

**"LOVELY WOMAN"**

(CORNETTE COLEMAN) 1988

The achingly melancholy melody of "Lovely Woman" has made it one of the few Cornette Coleman compositions to enter the standard jazz repertoire. But the tune's sense of self-contained isolation also suggests the potential for comment on the modern predicament, and it's surely to this which has driven *Osmande Galas* and *Masayoshi Takayanagi* to it. Galas's reading for piano and voice, on her live album *La Serpiente Canta* (Mute, 2003), is characteristically daring. Restoring the piano from whence harmonic dominance Coleman had struggled to liberate his muse, was a dangerous move, but wisely she uses it for little more than accents, keeping the melody in her vocal line. And such vocal, Galas's operatic blues, grieves right at the soul here, a wondrous moan of grief and pain somewhere between the spiralingly ugly howl of a Middle Eastern folklorist and a distorted wail of a doomsday cultist. Later, on *Galaxy 500*, after cancer surgery and a lengthy hospitalisation, iconoclastic electric guitar improvisor Takayanagi found himself incapable of the intense physical demands of his regular free group. Instead he turned in a solo album (*Lonely Woman*, Mute Sound Corporation, 1982) of subtle, internalised covers of photal tunes from his past, among them pieces by Lennie Tristano and Lee Konitz. The album opens with "Lovely Woman". Like Coleman, Takayanagi was deeply wary of the straightjacket of conventional harmony. Here, he expounds at length (it's more than twice as long as Coleman's original) on the 1959 *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* on the theme in purely melodic and rhythmic terms, unfurling long, darting lines that suddenly clench and clutch into dense, knotted clusters. The continually shifting rhythmic structures and the merest shades of feedback and distortion offer glimpses of Takayanagi's technical subtlety, but it's the sombre colour that really shocks. Deftly deconstructing the song's original meaning, he has no hint of the fun and existential for full-bodied resonance. Takayanagi comments, "I always feel that beauty of form or tone is lies. Playing music that's muddy and violently optimised is an essential way of getting at the truth." Takayanagi's misanthropic invective is nothing less than a magisterial magnification of Coleman's original evocation of modernism and melancholy. (AC)



#### "LYRICS OF FURY"

(DRIPPIN' BASS/DEF 1990)

Two crucial values of hip hop are machine and writing one's own lyrics. Both are totally subverted in *Tricky's* cover version of Eric B & Rakim's "Lyrics Of Fury", from his best and most cohesive album, 1990's *Pre-Millennium Tension* (Island). Every element of the original is in some way bent, the best, originally a senseless James Brown loop, is now played in a distinctly more rattlesnake/junkyard way, and the song seems fauter than the original as a result. This may also be a consequence of Rakim's always calm delivery, though, since the vocals this time out are handled not by Tricky (whose rasp might have retained too much of the original's foreboding) but by his female foil/duopartner, Martine. She locks Rakim's bass and his mastery of cadence, sounding out of breath and then into it, more than once, in a jolting, Thus, in a way, a skeleton key unlocking the not so hidden intention of the album as a whole. *Pre-Millennium Tension* was an attempt to strip off nearly all the baggage Tricky had accrued since *Maxinquaye*'s shuddering success. He took away the melodies, made the beats stately slow rather than giddily frenzied out, and couched out lyrics about near total abomination. What he did to Rakim's "Lyrics Of Fury", he attempted to do to the music press version of himself with his entire second album. Both gambits succeeded. (PF)

#### "MASTERS OF WAR"

(BOB DYLAN 1963)

Tackling arms dealing and war profiteering, Bob Dylan's "Masters Of War" (from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, Sony, 1963) is perhaps his most perennially topical protest song. Yet when she comes to sing it on *drummer* **Reinhold Friedl**'s "A Cry" (Dynamite!, 2000), *Goldie* resists the urge to do more than a few reverberations about the song. Dylan's righteous anger spills over into sheer malevolence – check the clanging kites, "I'll watch while you're kneeled down to your deathbed/And I'll stand over your grave/Until I'm sure that you're dead." Any doubts she might have about the song, however, don't detract from her tremendous performance of it. And the rubble and twisted girders of the music laid down by Amelinda with bassist Todd Sickape, guitarist Kevi Cline and saxophonist Eric Crystal in place of Dylan's urgency, she and the musicians pace it like a lament for destruction, with Amelinda wailing the lyric to the ground and holding it there for nine minutes, while she wrings every bitter's hidden morsel of compassion from the savagery of Dylan's condemnation of the warmongers. Her reading remains questioning, her emotions contained, until she reaches the bit about fear of bringing children into this world, when she pours all her bitter sorrow into the lines: "You ain't worth the blood/that runs through your veins." (BM)

#### "METAL MACHINE MUSIC"

(ISLAND REED 1976)

We all think we know about Metal Machine Music, those four LP sides of howling, overloading frequency patterns crashing in phosphorescent clouds of radioactive gas, all generated by the feedback loops that occur when two extremely amplified electric guitars are brought into close proximity with their speaker systems. A diabolical noise fest. In other words, and if you believe Lou Reed's dictation (ie Lester Bangs and John Cale), also a monomaniac act of hubris: an elaborate attempt to alienate a major record company, a giant fuckyou to a desegregated audience. On the other hand, with Metal Machine Music Lou finally found the notes of *The Velvet Underground* from the prison of the songforms that had constrained it even in the group's most out there moments ("European Son", "Sister Ray", "Melody Laughing", "The Nothing Song"), and let it roar, wild and free. At the moment of its release in 1976 Metal Machine Music represented the purest distillation yet of the musicals of technology that had animated rock 'n' roll since the early 1960s.

On another level, the message coded into its liminated noise-alarm stated that music and society have moved beyond the expressive possibilities offered by "pure" acoustics, melody, harmony the tyranny of the tempered scale; instead, the complexity of the world can only now be articulated via amplification, texture, gain, frequencies, overtones, the opening up of the aperiodic, microtonal spaces that lurk in the margins between the notes. Of course, this was the same message that had already been handed down to a generation of experimental composers by the music and writings of Luigi Russolo, Edgard Varèse, John Cage and Henry Cowell. And in the face of the overwhelmingly hostile reception that it received on its release, Lou insisted that it was a serious composition, comparable to the contemporary electronic works of Xenakis (he even subtitled it, "An Electronic Xenakis").

In such a context, it is perhaps not so utterly absurd that a contemporary German chamber music ensemble such as *Zeltklang* should attempt to reproduce Metal Machine Music in a live performance scored for amplified instruments, with the musicians reading from a time-coded score transposed from the original by Reinhold Friedl, Ulrich Krieger and Luca Venturoli. To these ears, what's weird about *Zeltklang's* performance, which was premiered in Berlin in March 2002 and is due to reappear later this year on the Asphalt label, is how it sounds like it is being played by an orchestra of Henry Flynt, the New York musician and conceptualist, a shadowy figure in American modernism, associate of both La Monte Young and Andy Warhol, who once took guitar lessons from a certain Lou Reed, but whose best music involved him playing, literally impaled, hideous things on an army of delay units to achieve an effect that impacts on the synapses like the added equivalent of strobe light... Like Flynt, *Zeltklang* places the emphasis on the feedback in future systems, in order to reproduce Metal Machine Music's St Vitus Disease frequency patterns and strained feedback squalls. And as the piece progresses, the howling strings, bayed cymbals, raped piano mists and Reed's own feedback guitar attain a noise that is sufficiently orbital to tear a hole in the temporal fabric, reconstituting Metal Machine Music with its origins deep inside Manhattan's post-war avant-garde, turning what still rings as a sick joke into a celebration of the noise aesthetic that has spawned some of the most extraordinary music of our time. (Th)



Zeltklang's Reinhold Friedl

#### "MONEY"

(GCR/GRIBBARD/1989)

The *Flying Lizards'* 1979 debut single on Virgin was in a tradition that goes back to the earliest days of rock 'n' roll: the harkening of an old, respected stability in the current revolutionaries. "Money" is a "Rock 'n' Roll" record, Sid Vicious' "I'm With You" and Walter Murphy's "A Fifth Of Beethoven" (sic). It was a top five hit in the UK, to group leader David Cunningham's abounding shock as a wild underground hero. Here was a quintessentially black R&B number tinted by a cold, anonymous sounding Englelwoman with a push accent, accompanied by faux-Asian strings and cheap metallics, and with interspersed dubish breaks – a groundbreaking single even in these times of shattered musical boundaries. In fact, the song was a big crossover hit, nearly as popular with the disco crowd as with the art punks. Cunningham's reverence in treating a rock 'n' roll classic this way was compounded by those disco kids' hardline enough to buy the LP; it was filled with art school prankster Cunningham's not so radio-friendly sound experiments. "Money" thus acted as a kind of musical Trojan horse. (BM)

#### "MORNING DEW"

(DODD/ROSTROTEL 1962)

"Morning Dew" never really had an "original version". It was written by Bonnie Dobson in 1960 (New York City, and, like so many compositions of the era, it became part of the Greenwich Village lingua franca. The recent Cuban missile crisis looms over the song's stark, repetitive lyrics, which sketches out a post-apocalyptic landscape populated only by the lonely yearning of the protagonist – and a string of alpha male believers who recast versions of the song dripping with *beso profundo* anguish. Fred Neil set the tone on his debut album *Teen Down The Walls*; Tim Rose followed in 1967 with a screeching, amplified take driven along by his mezzo meer. And each subsequent interpretation – by Lee Hazlewood, Jeff Beck, The Grateful Dead, The Allman Brothers Band, and further out, further out, the band that became the horror at the heart of the song, *Antarctic Neudecker*'s version, on *Front Of Our Deer* (Coffey/Offenbach/Neudecker/Potemak, 1967), inexplicably strips away two decades of histone. It was recorded in Berlin, of course, and it bears an authentic imprint of the Cold War, with inching slide guitar and death rattles permission that echo the breathless hiss of radiation sickness. And Bixx Borgeld delivers an incredulously vocal, his and, aridly whispering escaping into the mix with the chilled force of compressed air. "Morning Dew" may have sounded conventional by the standards of Kollaps or Halber Mensch, but by restoring the wintery impact of that original composition, it remains one of Neudecker's most radical recordings. (CS)

#### "MY FAVORITE THINGS"

(DODGERS/HAMMERMITE/1989)

Amidst all the *drum*, *debut*, *subverted*, *gone native*, *decolonised* and *decolonialised*, there is no shortage of theoretical writing about what John Coltrane and his evolving quartet – then consisting of McCoy Tyner, Steve Davis and Elton Jones – did to a lightweight showtime in three-quarter time at Atlantic's New York studio on 23 October 1962. But how do you explain what happened to "My Favorite Things" just over five years later when a new Coltrane group took the stage at Kosaken-kin Hall in Tokyo? The original version comes in at under 34 minutes and that was considered fairly radical for the time. The version on *Live In Japan* (Impulse!) lasts almost an hour and in the course of it tears the melody and the harmonic structure to bloody shreds. When it ends, there seems to be no more tonal or tonalist voltage left to went, not just on this song but on any American popular song. Wife Alice and loyal bassist Jimmy Garrison were still in the group, drummer Rashied Ali was taking polymetrics out into new dimensions, while young saxophonist Pharoah Sanders (who it's often forgotten was 14 years Coltrane's junior) sounded rather than playing them. Both saxophones were dubbing with alto saxophones again, looking for an ever newer sound. (BM)

## Suicide



## "96 TEARS"

ROBERT MARTINEZ 1985

This is a cover version in name only. The original, recorded in 1965 in Bay City, Michigan by the very creepy 7 & The Mysterians, is an anthem for the Nuggets generation, a sullen, smoky, and mysterious song by the three most records played out over an organ-driven Stone Age. Vega and Rev had been there, it's one of the most hopelessly perfect performances you're likely to hear this side of The Shaggs. The **Suicide** duo of Alan Vega and Martin Rev, by contrast, always sounded utterly at one with their own unique and extraordinary soundworld, and their cover of "96 Tears" might be the only Suicide track you need to hear, as it distills their future-retro take on rock 'n' roll amorphosis down to three minutes of spellbinding electro-drama. Recorded live in 1977 at CBGB's in New York City, but only released in 1998 as part of the **Black First Label**'s reissue of the group's 1978 debut album, the backing track consists of a rhythmic bus beatng out 16th notes, a synthetic baseline that coils around itself like a Mobius strip, and a vicious organ chord that billows and swells like a cloud of noxious gas. Vega sings like Charlie Feathers reincarnated as a Lower East Side hustler, and The Mysterians' version sounds like this only in a paraphrase; he appears to be the king of rock 'n' roll, and the lyrics are a vital link, "And you'll start crying." "The our homeven/you coming from the sky/On mama, mama, mama/They looked in my eye. And I started to cry." "At this point you might be wondering why this is listed as a cover at all. But Suicide were always the most referential and sentimental of all the groups that in the 70s came up to celebrate the lousy melodianas of New York streetlife, and the due lies in a line Vega delivers a few beats later: "Yeah, we're right here today... to let you know that one of our friends... just died." So this is an instant elegy, an off the cuff threnody, and Vega returns the only way a 24/7 rock 'n' roll outsider knows how, channelling all his pain and hurt through a trope lifted from the lowest levels of the culture that has sustained him all these years. A footnote in 1979 the "96 Tears" trope resurfaces on **The Clash** "Human Fly". Over a beat so sleepy Russ Meyer would despair it, like interior thoughts and souls the lines, "I'm a human fly/ And I don't know why/ got 96 tears and 95 eyes." On first hearing it I decided like another hokey cop from **Gremlins** rock 'n' roll is comic book. But listen again and it's Kafka in Cuban heels, an expression of existential alienation so dumb even... The Mysterians might get it. (TM)

## Cabaret Voltaire



## "NO ESCAPE"

(SAKAMO/SAVAGE/LAWRENCE) 1966

By covering **Sky Saxon And The Seeds'** 1966 garage rock classic "No Escape" on their never-bettered 1979 debut album **Man Up** (Mute), **Cabaret Voltaire** asserted their allegiance to the then prevailing punk insistence on raw pop immediacy rather than the cosmic academic strands of experimental electroclash that were considered to be the right might have been. The song is a half-cutaway, half-curtain piece. The track's cover is remarkable for the way it sticks so carefully to the original version's trashy template. Chris Watson's distorted Farfisa organ and Richard H. Kink's tatty, howling fuzz guitar somehow manage to play it straight while suggesting something far darker and wilder. Stephen Mallinder's choked vocal is as posturingly adolescent as Saxon's, but he blends it of any vestige of redemptive rock energy. The result is a touchstone of DIY electronics and an object lesson in how to make a cover your own – play the song, not the concept, and trust that your own sonic identity will filter through. (WM)

## "NO FUN"

(THE STOOGES) 1969

The Stooges' sound was unfiltered, raw and brutal. In the context of late 1960s pretensions, it was positively Neanderthal. The steam hammer riff of "No Fun" was a blunt, noisy, and chaotic assault on the ear. The song is a broad assailed by waves of rhythmic mayhem. There was no song moment – only the inchoate wailing of four vicious street brawlers witnessed onto tape by John Cale's minimalist production techniques on their 1969 debut, **The Stooges**. "No Fun" was as artless and singular as a clubkid's punch. The **Minneapolis** trio's instrumental brass revolting of The Stooges' canopus upends these preconceptions. Featuring Mike Hagedorn on trombone, Rob Pfeifer on tuba and Shannon Marrow on drums, they turn "No Fun" into a sassy, joyous glam stamp. This is far from being a sendup or cheap gag. The tuba's broad braying bass charts the song along with the floor filling boogie of a big band in full flight. The trombone carries the melody, in a comical swagger, confident and celebratory. "No Fun" can lazily be foisted as an explosive pungent of outside anger. On **The Rehearsals**, The Pugs The Stooges (Abbie COH), it becomes a completely new song of power and energy. It shows the Stooges left a template for reductive and minimal riffing capable of much more than the tawdry springing and swerving mimesis preferred by copasetic punks. (NS)

## "ONE VISION"

(OGENIO) 1965

Slovenian provocateurs **Latahac** were only partly joking when they used to say they approached cover versions like Duchamps or Warhol, adding their signatures to readymades and making them their own. Yet they were absolutely serious when they chose to address the difficult issues of totalitarianism, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and negotiating their own path between the former communist East and the capitalist West through other people's words and music. Covering songs was, for Latahac, a mask that at once revealed and concealed their intentions, even as their magisterial 1986 reading of The Rolling Stones' "Sympathy For The Devil" made their position clear. A year earlier, they released their most audacious and uncompromising version of "One Vision" (taken from **Elton John**'s **Don't Go**, Mute, 1987), by simply translating the lyrics into German, stiffening up its four-square beat into a martial rhythm and executing the finished version with deadpan precision. They converted Queen's silly posturing into a piece of art that exemplified rock's liberative principles by undercutting its totalitarian one-transmitter, 10,000 receivers principle at the core of rock performance. Through the very excitement generated by this act of transgression, they tormented audiences by forcing them to identify with the lead singer recast as dictator. (WM)

## "PEOPLE ARE STRANGE"

(THE DOORS) 1967

"People Are Strange" was the first single from the second Doors album, two minutes of Brechtian cabaret wrapped around a lyrical lament for the outcast. Despite the thematic melancholy, the song's louring bounce had a humorous edge, but it was practically unknown compared to the ultra-goofy version crafted 15 years later by oven-hucksters **Shockhead** on their debut album **Earth Vs Shockabilly** (rough Trade, 1983). Throughout their career, the two of Eugene Chadbourne, Kramer and David Licht chattered numerous classic rock covers through their cartoonish brand. Missing the mark as often as they hit it, but, on "People Are Strange," they nailed it with a 200th hammer. After a clausely opening full of cracks and snarls, Chadbourne's "I'm a Cheetah in the Terra whiney" solo with its monster crash coda reaches the song's bouncers theme. A few bars of high speed, stop-start jamming precise Chadbourne's a miffed voice, which bows the knees through the surrounding sheen like bubbles cast into a sandstorm. From there, wry snarl chords and althy runs take over, along the song a brawny freedom that eventually becomes a snappy downtown jazz jam. Shockabilly's ecstatic romp doesn't invert or desecrate The Doors' original vang so much as it injects it with helium, twisting Jim Morrison's contemplative snail into a delirious flight. (WM)

## "ROCKET NO 9"

(SUN RA) 1969

Sun Ra himself re-interpreted this repeatedly, such is the plastic potential of its simplicity. In essence, "Rocket No 9" is a single rift, with a single masthead line, a sketch sample enough to serve as a launch pad into the wilds of jazz. It's the catch of a lifetime, or the hands of **Yo La Tengo**, the clatter of a million voices. It's a Sun Ra rehearsal captured in a New York kitchen that became a Sun solo in 1969. It is almost stoked in its tempo, which accentuates the marvelous wonkiness of the whole tune, in 1971 came a completely different reading, with vocalists slinging loose across a majestic collage of space organ and bass clarinet. **Yo La Tengo**'s take translates that deep honk horn straight onto the lower registers of the electric guitar as if it had been intended that way all along. After playing "Rocket No 9" live for a year, two takes surfaced on a long planned 7" with **Planet Records** in 1997. The drums are battersly propulsive, Inc. Cohen's guitar at once madly acidic, and some spluttering, jagged electric organ screams. The versions point up the parallels between jazz and rock's breakfast traditions, anchored by the elemental riffing – but also by an era shared by both parties, of DIY production and neocommunist aesthetics. (SD)



Latahac

## "SEE THAT MY GRAVE IS KEPT CLEAN"

(BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON) 1938

Blind Lemon Jefferson's fleet, complex guitar lines and eerie, highpitched vocals, as well as the Old Testament desperation of his lyrical imagery, set him apart from those who came before, and made his impact indelible on those who followed. In his original recording, *Demolition Galore*, Kefi Helms, two performers who share a focus on the dark, the sense of endurance and the journeys of the human soul through layers of torment, would pick up this harrowing classic and make it their own. Their approaches to the song, though, are as different from each other as their work generally is from every other kind of music on the planet. Helms tackled Jefferson on his two mirror image *Black Blues* (*Les Oubliés Du Spell Et De L'âme*, 2004), recording one version of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean," for each disc – acoustic and electric, respectively. The acoustic version is almost deathly hushed; Helms sounds like he's playing in a graveyard, and wants to keep it down for fear of waking the spirits. His near whisper of a vocal is matched by his delicate plucking and strumming of the guitar, never allowing it to erupt into the humors of sound his electric so routinely grants him. The electric version is the opposite, in nearly every possible way. Helms howls and roars, insistent and raw, to the microphone at times. Like every track on the electric *Black Blues*, this one is an assault – and seeks to flinch away from the assault. Matching his enraged, demonic vocalizing, his guitar gets as aggressive as on exorcising soul discs like Eisenberg That Assout To Acknowledge or the *Book Of Etienne Set Alame*. Diamanda Galas has essayed "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" three times on disc – she's apparently been using it as a concert closer since first recording it for 1992's *The Singer*. Accompanied by her own throbbing, ornate piano solo on *La Septenta Canto and Defilement: Will And Testament, Orders From The Dead* (both Mute, 2003), she transforms Jefferson's blues into an incantation and a warning. She seems to be interpreting the song as the monologue of a reverent, a vengeful spirit come back to torment the living who have disobeyed its deities, as conceived in its title. In this way, it's unsurprising Galas performs every song in the same overwrought, of technically accomplished, way. Only when the lyrics match her intense intensity, as in this case, does real transcendence occur. (PV)



Diamanda Galas

## "SIGN OF THE TIMES"

(PRINCE) 1989

In 1987 Prince's "Sign 'O' The Times" hit like funk in excellence, squeaky chrome-laced beats punctuating a wry but world weary vocal drawl. It was difficult to comprehend how he could top it. He couldn't. Or maybe he didn't have to. If this awesome tune were reduced to its final recognizable essence, then that sound would be the beat. Last year *Keddy & Deed Gee* versioned this pinnacle with an audacious beatless reading, called "Sign Of The Dub" (Hyperdub 10"), which stripped everything except the vocals. Most dubists play the vocals from the mix, content to play the role of the instrumentation. What numero is an audited line, pure, the first delivered zombielike, matter of fact, without emotion. Nearly 20 years on, it possesses a stark acceptance of dissolution and desolation to the astatine wit of the original observation. (SD)

Rosland B. Howard and Lydia Lunch



## "SOME VELVET MORNING"

(LEE HAZLEWOOD) 1967

Jeffrey Lee Peltier and Nanci Sinatra's original version of "Some Velvet Morning" – was already pretty cutt out there before Lydia Lunch & Rosland B. Howard got their hands on it in 1992 for a 12" single (4AD, re-released on the Lunch compilation, *Widowspeak*, New Millennium Communications) and dragged it over to an altogether darker realm than the vaguely psychedelic one of its author's imaginings. But the fact that the song withstands such a transmogrification speaks to its strength. This is a classic duet, with two voices, two memories, two melodic lines. Even so, there's room for the teams between Howland's growlings and Sinatra's coy delivery (in the character of Phoebe, no less). Whether it's not Greek mythology engages on the story (as neither can I) or real life literesses in the rather mated Country voice of Howland, it's a story that's only partially told, there's a fugitive in the story that's only partially known by both of them. Lunch & Howard's monotonous singing and airy backings and reinforce them with Howard's powerful strokes of guitar and the rumbling basslines of Barry Adams. This instrumental backing is seeped, right through to its noxy dissolution, complete with grinding metal on metal strings and some chunky piano from Genevieve Molokan, then it's the voices that startle in their perverse eroticisms: Howard's is a strangled bass, snarling its way through an opening line – "Some velvet morning when I'm straight" – that raises a few inguine eyebrows. Lydia Lunch, on the other hand, is a Phoebe one could believe in. (LG)

## "STELLA BY STARLIGHT"

(WALTER HENDRICK/JOHN ZORN) 1947

It was, apparently, John Zorn's idea for *Derek Bailey* to record an album of ballads, and thus in 1998 without a shred of irony or pretension, he did just that. It's impossible to tell, "Derek Bailey plays standards" was a tagline so perverse as to seem almost inevitable. It was widely known that the guitarist was steeped in the classic songbook and could, as Diamanda Galas memorably said, "play the shit out of a blues"; if he so chose. A couple of years before, Bailey tested his audience with a jazzier's "scout" on *Drop Me Off At 96th*, which was a little like hearing a Klingon suddenly reciting "To be or not to be". On *Ballads* (Trax, 2002) he teases, crowsbombs, roughly cresses and coaxes a baker's dozen familiar songs. None sound more unctuously familiar and alien than "Stella". Gone the crooner's constricted tenor, gone the cool, muted, modal spin of Miles Davis. Just an awkward remembrance, stumbling towards consummation without a torch or even a safety match to guide it. Beautiful. Strange. Beautiful. (BM)

## "STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON"

(NWA) 1988

In some ways *Kid 'n Play* is one of the few who could tackle NWA's epochal manifesto "Straight Outta Compton", in anyone else's hands it would have suffered the ignominious fate of apocryphal commodification – just think Puffy and "Public Enemy No. 1", But So Ca!s number one vegga with attitude has the erogogic to realize the only way to emulize its raw fuckyou energy is to use the original material and love it. In the way a cruel boy with a magnifying glass caresses a onion fly. No, he didn't dislodge it, marvelling at the beauty and wonder of the thing. He has a healthy appreciation of violence. Even before you play it, the seven-inch record (4AD Test Recordings) spells out what is going on: the blank, black centre label is inscribed by a ring of white vinyl. This personal encounter with a heavy crew from America's most excluded gangland is precisely why it has become the focus of so many fantasies of white suburban kids – because they're alienated tool. The opening rallying cry, "You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge," is processed into an emulsified, metallic slather. Beats and rhymes that were so tax and full of focused attitude disintegrate, colliding in clusters as rhymes dislodge between waves of noise like the semi-coherent fury of an unshelled middle-class teen. Certain phrases get stuck like a junky's agitated mantra, repeated over and over, losing definition with each iteration. The raw attitude of black laptop's street and white electronica's bedroom intersect in this track which, in its departure from each, manages to illuminate the natural resonances common to both. (RM)

## "TAINTED LOVE"

(ED COBB) 1964

Ignore the rabid cartoonish Marilyn Manson version, which is about as soar as an episode of *Scoby Doo*. *Ca!*'s reworking of So Ca!'s number one version of Gloria Jones's 1968 non-hit, for once merits that overused epithet, "mesmerizing". Even without the accompanying video set in an AIDS ward (and featuring Marc Almond as the Angel of Death), "Tainted Love" continues to resonate 20 years after its release. Replacing Coe (Ba!)s electric bounce with choral and funeral bells, and pumping up the riff's famously insinuating double prod into devastating orchestral blasts, *Ca!* twist the lyric into something simultaneously dour and elegant, creepy but almost unbearably sed. "Now I know I've got to run away," laments the late John Balance in the exhausted tones of someone who's been running away for a while, which is taken as an exploration of sexual obsession or a direct response to the emerging AIDS epidemic – either of it was the B side to "Panik" (Force & Form 94.422 12", 1985) and proceeds west to the newly inaugurated Terrence Higgins Trust – "Tainted Love" is the sound of a group not simply covering a song, but inhabiting it. (RM)



Derek Bailey

## "TE RECUERDO AMANDA"

(VICTOR JARAI 1968)

Can there be a voice more nakedly poignant than that belonging to one-time "shrimping bops" of Soft Machine, **Robert Wyatt**? Over the past three decades and more, that voice has often re-enacted the feelings of others in addition to his own. Wyatt's project to "lose his voice" by getting it out of him (from The Markins, Charkie Hales, Chaka Khan, Daga, is reflected in the appeal of what he perceives as a given song's political content. Nowhere in his career has social consciousness dominated more appropriately with his interpretation than in his 1984 cover of Victor Jara's "Te Recuerdo Amanda" ("Remember You, Amanda") (*Work In Progress*, Hanschaff). A much-loved exponent of Chile's *Nuevo Cancion* movement, Jara was executed in the wake of a military coup in the early '70s. His song recalled (and most likely remastered) his parents' relationship, its lyrics evoking a revolutionary worker killed by oppression. Wyatt causes "Te Recuerdo Amanda" at a remove from the robust timing of Jara's flamenco guitar. In his version, time stretches according to the metronome of operatic passion, like the final footsteps of someone condemned. At the same time, one-fingered keyboard melodies entwine, drifting toward a distant horizon. Wyatt reaches the song's final line and there it holds its final note for an aching eternity, as though he might keep the doomed Manuel alive for as long as he could sing his name. The keyboards modulate to a surprise conclusion. Wyatt runs out of breath and Manuel never returns to the factory. (RH)

## "THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT"

(MORRISSEY/SMART 1996)

When Germany's *Die Dresdner* aka **Schneider TM**, released his remake of one of The Smiths' best loved hymns to the exultant self-pity of youth, he took on the bawhore of English '80s pop – and won. "Light 3000" first appears on Schneider's bioluminescent EP (*Oil Slang*, 2000), a version of the Manchester group's "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out" (from *The Queen Is Dead*, Rough Trade). Perhaps it started out as former drummer Dek's ode to The Smiths. But its eventual re-interpretation shone for brighter than the original. Whereas Morrissey's plodding gourds and nasal white peacock form a kind of stately upthrust, Schneider's vocoder version conversely creates a series of bitter-sweet detours which reverberate with depth, colour, texture. The jangle of Kanti's guitars can't compete with Schneider's magical bursts of slight melancholia, glistening like the tears of truth running through Morrissey's nihilist lyrics. (SG)



Joe Berocca



## "TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS"

(LEONARD COHEN 1966)

The largely forgotten *Soil Cormier*, for a tantalizingly brief period, became one of the preeminent avant-rock groups of the 1970s. The original group were a curious mix of musicians: Ryo-ichi Fujii (vocals), Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno and bass player Bill McCormick had all collaborated in the past. This core group was joined by keyboard player Frances Monkman, formerly of Quirky Air, who went on to join classical Prog group, Sky; a virtually unknown blues slide guitarist, Lloyd Watson, who had won a competition to support Roy Music in 1976; and a precociously talented 19 year old session drummer, Seman Phillips. This eclectic mix is what made the group so intriguing and their live version of The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows" so extraordinary. On *603* (Live, Island, 1976), they took the Beatles' deadly serious, proto-psychadelic take on the Tibetan Book Of The Dead and had some fun with it. "TNK" begins with a loopy, fuzzy groove, gradually gaining momentum as Watson's slide guitar starts to reveal its full potential. The band's unique sound has you eventually emerging out of tape loops and feedback. As Manzanera soars on the main vocal melody, the group soon kicks, with Manzanera's high speed, Eastern-influenced, finger Rhodes lines a-hooting like vapour trails, the melodic material derived from the myriad of tape loops – some sparsened – that ran through the original. And, as the group hit the final straight, thundering twin bass drums and all, they are all playing on and around another of the tape loops. (MB)

## "WARSZAWA"

(BOWIE/ENO 1977)

The shortlived quartet **Joe Berocca** convened with drummer Jacques Tholot and bassists Hubertus Beermann and Francis Niermann, upon hearing of the death of Chet Baker, recorded one of the summer's most memorable albums, *La Nuit Est Au Courant* (on *808*, 1998), on *Art Ensemble* and *Montage* labels. In 1989, Joe Berocca, along with Beermann and Niermann, cycled in the night cut-off from recordings made during several brief tours in 1989 and 1990. In Berocca's hands, this track from David Bowie's *Low* sounds less like the siren song of late '70s angst-ridden Berlin and more like a field holler reconfigured by Donald Ayler. Berocca attacks the simple tonal melody with the gusto of another Ayler. The Art Ensemble's Lester, his trumpet whistled and refracted through a bank of harmonicas and delay units, while the eternally unpredictable Tholot and the bassists swirl underneath in an odd irregular groove, a kind of Cold Wave free jazz. (DWBz)

## "YOU DOO RIGHT!"

(HOOONEY/CHUKAY/CH-MIDI BEZE/DEKAROU 1998)

The stark "You Doo Right" originally took up the entire second side of Can's 1988 debut album *Monster Movie*. Their then-vocalist, American singer and artist Malcolm Mooney, keeps returning to the same verse over Jaki Liebezeit's and Holger Czukay's stripped drums and basic keyboard player Imran Schmid's, meanwhile, hardly plays anything at all. On *From A Ghost From The Darkened Sea* (The New Sound/Ghost House), **Masaki Bando**, guitar and keyboards, of Japanese psychedelic group *Yume*, acoustically strums it like a blues blues. Although he leaves the chorus, the words and tune are barely recognizable, and moosie it's a guttural incantation, backbounced by distant, flute-like keyboards and bongo slaps. "Up the stairs, down the stairs," he mutters, referencing the stargazing Mooney chant that infamously ran through one entire late '80s Can performance until the bearded singer was helped offstage. This version forms a bridge – long after the event – between that era of Can and the sort of folk Improv the group occasionally explored with their Japanese singer *Domo Suzuki*. (MB)

## "YUME WA YORU HIRAKU" ("DREAMS BLOOM COME NIGHT")

(YUKIHIKO SONO 1995)

Maybe it's Bushshen, but Japanese popular song makes much of the gossamer barrier between dreams and reality. One enduring example is the 1995 *Yume Wa Yoru Hiraku* ("Dreams Bloom Come Night"), purveyor for the industry's last great balladists by a Tim Pen Aley hook in 1996. That year, six different female singers released versions, and unusually the lyrics were meant to aid time to fit their images. The original was by *Mon Soni*, who cooingly sang of being dumped and dumped in the rain by a heartless dad – *But I wouldn't mind getting wet if it was just the two of us*. Four years later, the song was typically updated for the urban delinquent generation by *Reiko Fuji* (now best known as the mother of Japan's number one R&B duo *Hikaru Utada*). Fuji's narrator is a half-baked street girl, but still with an all too fragile heart. She sings, "Night-blooming neon is a living flower/Night-flying butterflies/We're too poor/We make a drink to go with their lies." As Japan's student movement took itself apart in 1972, radical band *Kao Mikuni* took the song to an unimagined extreme. Deliberately borrowing the ridiculously overt emotionalism and chase arrangement of the pre-processor, Mikuni undercut the original's miasma of dreams and desire for a kind of revolutionaries. For its disillusioned narrator, "A whole shelf of Sami and Mori/Won't tell you tomorrow's weather." Parodying the glamorized, erotic glistening of Fuji's version, Mikuni's narrator chores up over the results of grinding poverty and despair for young immigrants to the city – soaking cabbage and weeping "salas" off ginko mags in a bedsit, while the family wait back home for a postal order. His final verse rages against the pop platitude of the song itself: "You can sing of night-blooming dreams/But there are no dreams to bloom/Still less any night." (AC)

Contributors: Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Clive Bell, Marcus Bow, Ben Bonhwick, Julian Cowley, Alan Cummings, Joe Dale, Phil England, Phil Freeman, Susanne Glasser, Louise Gray, Jim Haynes, Richard Henderson, Tony Hennington, David Keenan, Bille Kopp, Dave Mandl, Brian Marley, Marc Masters, Keith Meldin, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, Moa Mizuno, Simon Reynolds, Chris Sharp, Nick Southgate, David Stubbs, David Tapp, Dan Harborth

# Charts

Playlists from the outer limits  
**Dead Slow**  
Sharp bend

## Circus Maximus 15

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Antibalas Collective  
Frode (Fid Cat)  
Bass & Bass  
Bass & Bass  
Cyrus Centre Officed  
Buckell & Taylor  
Let's Smash Up Our Love (Soundville)  
**DJ Maxxman**  
Baba The Wawa (M2G3/Mental Groove)  
Bass Of Steelman  
Tove (Waka)  
Austin Autorec  
Sakura (Shimamura)  
Lolita Archivist/Do Wigt  
Kone Tide Digital II (Kure Grammofon)  
It's...  
Van Exessen Tous Les Trucs De Vos Coines (Asteric Earth)  
Her / Printing Is The Internal Method (Southern Lord)  
Wighassen Brothers/Hobgob Whithers  
Rambas Pimpem (Pimp-A-Teen)

Antibalas Collective

Movements Turen (Ellevenrecords)

Medialy Digital/Artivis Gosev/Craig Armstrong

Top Dolls (Muine Recordings)

Corinna (MPLD)

Li Ching (Brooklyn Bruin)

Velvete

Li-Ping (Fenni, 2040in (Monopole))

Compiled by Christophe Taper, Nantes, France,  
[www.jelinek.com/Circus-Maximus.html](http://www.jelinek.com/Circus-Maximus.html)

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# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl



Robert Wyatt (centre) and group

## ROBERT WYATT AND FRIENDS

THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE  
8 SEPTEMBER 1974

HANNIBAL CO

The rarity, or more accurately, non-existence of Robert Wyatt live performances was part of the reason I excitedly misread the *Soup Song* concert poster during Wyatt's curatorship of Meltdown (the annual music and arts festival on London's South Bank) in 2001, only to be miserably disappointed. Yes, the concert was all Wyatt's music and was performed in his presence, but no, it didn't actually feature Wyatt. In 2003 he agreed to come into the Resonance 104.4 FM studio as special studio guest on my show, *Scratching The Surface*. Sensing a scoop, I flattered with his artistic collaborator and wife, Alfreda Bergin, saying that I might as well borrow a keyboard, you know, just in case Robert felt like playing a song or two. Before I'd even finished this comment I was told politely, but in an uncertain terms, that Robert would most definitely not be doing anything like that. Wyatt hasn't appeared onstage since guesting with the Ramcoats in 1981 and it looks like it's going to stay that way, so thank God someone recorded this 1974 concert.

Even then, it wasn't easy to get Wyatt onstage. It was his first public performance since the accident when he broke his back, which left him paraplegic (not counting the infamous *Top Of The Pops* performance to promote the single "I'm A Believer", when the programme's producer told him that having a man singing in a wheelchair was not suitable for a family show). The story goes that the Theatre Royal concert was prompted by Richard Branson, who told Wyatt that a number of top London-based musicians at the time – coincidentally, Wyatt's friends – wanted to get him to play live, while telling the same musicians that Wyatt really wanted to do a show involving them. A bootleg of the concert has been doing the rounds for decades, but this mixing board

**Mike Barnes welcomes the official release of Robert Wyatt's legendary 1974 concert, his only headline performance since the accident that left him wheelchair-bound**

recording is a real improvement in sound quality. What a treat.

The core of the set is the 1974 album *Rock Bottom*, which is played in its entirety. It's clear that the music for the album was written – and recording plans discussed – just before Wyatt's accident, but in some interviews he suggests that his convalescence helped shape its final form. Whatever, those who have only heard the recorded songs – lush, childlike and dreamy, but with disquiet seeping in at their edges – might be surprised how strong they sounded live. After a fractured version of Hugh Hopper's "Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening" and his ex-Soft Machine colleague's poignant "Memories", the musicians get stuck into the *Rock Bottom* material with great gusto. Based around Wyatt's "dream rhythm section" of Laune Allan on drums, Hopper on bass and Dave Stewart on keyboards, the assembled group deliver a version of "Sea Song" that goes from the pleading introductory verses into a stormy middle section, with Hopper's flat bass and Stewart's fuzz organ injecting venom into the song's melodic themes. Allan's playing is simply astonishing, swinging with a jazzy finesse, then playing across everyone, stretching time electrically through a series of disorienting snare rolls and tom-tom thuds, before snapping back on cue with nonchalant ease. Wyatt's wordless scat singing on the coda sounds energised by all this, capping off a tremendous all round performance.

Wyatt always had a knack of collaborating with some exceptional musicians, who would otherwise probably not have been heard by a rock audience. On "Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road", led by Fred Frith's frantic guitar strum, before South African trumpeter and Brotherhood Of Breath alumnus Mongezi Feza steps up to the glide. While the song rushes around him – with Wyatt's voice both strong and plaintive – he lets rip some extraordinary note-streams in his trademark hard, bright sound. After scarcely a breather comes "Alife", a rotating sequence of four

chords with Gary Windo playing the most visceral tenor sax this side of Peter Brötzmann. Wyatt then does his Kurt Schwitters-cum-James Joyce baby talk on the hazy "Alife". Also featured is "Calyx", from the first *Hatfield And The North* album, with Wyatt's new lyrics replacing the wordless phonetics of the original. "Instant Pussy" and "Signed Curtain" from the first *Matching Mole* album are also performed, with Julie Tippett's guesting on the former and Mike Oldfield offering his trademark, echoed slithering guitar lines on the latter.

An intermission of sorts, Tippett sings her piano ballad, "Mind Of A Child", a beautiful, poignant song. It might seem churlish to complain when presented with such a wealth of good music here, but another lengthy Tippett song from the original concert, the name of which escapes me, has been jinked. Admittedly, the two songs together did effectively drive a wedge through the set, but then she also sang on an ensemble free improvisation – including Wyatt on vox – which again was cut, presumably to squeeze it all onto one CD. It was something of a yelp 'n' skronk fest, for sure, but certainly deserving of our attention. Its omission is a damn shame, not least because the CD is 76 minutes long, five of which are taken up by one of these pointless and limiting 'secret tracks', in which a lengthy silence eventually yields a snippet of a backwards version of "Alife".

By the end of the show, the sound has become ragged, with Wyatt's vocals swamped during a boisterous encore of "I'm A Believer", with a guest appearance by Pink Floyd drummer and Rock Bottom producer Nick Mason. Frith plays some cranky lead guitar and Feza and Windo combine as a hairy brass section. With the tension released, this knees-up degenerates into a bit of a mess before segueing into a largely instrumental snippet of "The Laughing Policeman". While nothing's ever certain in this world, surely this concert marked the last time that Wyatt performed that particular song onstage. □

## TETUZI AKIYAMA

## PRE-EXISTENCE

LOCUST CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Japanese guitarist Tetuji Akiyama is a member of the two-bred. He performs in a duo with fellow guitarist Taka Sugimoto and he has recently been head playing tape-delayed electric guitar in duet with Gunter Müller's electronics on *Points And Stories* (Innervoice CD). Recorded in Tokyo, *Pre-Existence* is an acoustic set, Akiyama mixing interplay with steel strung wooden guitar. Especially on tracks where he plays slurring slide with a percussive attack his approach reveals vintage Country blues, mediated in a form that is fractured, displaced and slowed to a contemplative pace. Elsewhere he suspends chords, uncouthed phrases and soluted songs within a medium of active silence. The empty space abounds, between and beyond the sounds is audibly a component of his improving.

Akiyama's capacity to reduce his music with feeling consolidates the tunes like and affirms his affinity with those essentially carried and scripted tools that were engrossed throughout the playing life of guitar maestro John Fahey. But there is too a calligraphic parallel suggested by *Pre-Existence*. Sounds in silence placed like brushstrokes against blackness; auditory pictograms, generating sense in part through a sequential order of events, but also through unexpected juxtapositions and contrasts, and through the specific alliteration to suspending emptiness that each sound positively offers. Pregnant pauses heighten anticipation. Akiyama's execution remains unvaried, adhering to the same steady pace throughout, a dynamic of concentration and decision that steady lapses into anything that smacks of predictability. As with a Morton Feldman composition, there's a sense that hours might pass seemingly with no recollection of beginning and no ending; on the horizon. At the same time, 33 minutes proves just enough.

## OREN AMBARCHI

## TRISTE

SOUTHERN LAND CD

BY CHRIS SHARP

These days there's hardly a shortage of music that explores the outer limits of the electric guitar's sound palette – artists as diverse as Robert Hampson, Christian Fennesz, Rehal Tora and Keiji Haino have all mined the instrument for wayward sonic source material. But methodology is only ever part of the story – as recent reviews for the French label *Suspension et Inversion* have demonstrated, Sydneys' *Oren Ambarchi* has an unusual ability to imbue even the most abstract of conceptions with a gaze, almost stately emotional sonority. So, despite its appearance on the stony/doorstep label Southern Land – and Ambarchi's recent live appearances with Sunn O))) – *Triste* is no excise into extreme effage; in fact, it's as delicately weighted and determinedly expressive as anything else he has released.

This CD contains the two parts (previously available on limited edition vinyl) with a couple of remixes contributed by Tom Reichen. Over the course of 40 minutes, *Triste* itself describes an elegiac parabola: the thought near silence of its opening 60 seconds gradually opens up to admit single, cowering, plucked

notes that slowly coalesce into bewitching patterns where the subsonic thud of string noise and the tenuous crackle of static electricity are neatly intertwined with the radiant decay of Ambarchi's long-held chimes. As part one draws to a close, the mood is wistfully meditative, and the music poised. In part two, however, a quixotic drone gradually stirs its way into the mix, and eventually drolgiong takes hold, the music subjected to violent manipulation. After this fractured conclusion, Reichen's layered recordings come as welcome balm. His ready organ combine with Ambarchi's guitar in redemptive union, and the record's atmospheric, shimmering final chord retreats ineluctably into a silence made comfortable once more.

## HORACE ANDY

## EXCLUSIVELY

WACKER CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Horace Andy's career is one of the longest and most successful in reggae. His earliest recordings, for the producer Phil Squire, date from 1967, but his stompers on those sides to sing like Denley Wilson, his then hero, weren't particularly successful. Indeed, Andy himself later dismissed them as "Crap". A few years later, and sounding like the Horace Andy we know today, he pitched up at Clement Coopers Dodd's Studio One and recorded a clutch of songs that secured his reputation. Studio-hopping between labels and producers, as is still the way in the Jamaican record industry, led to successful sessions during the 1970s for, among others, Keith Hudson, Derrick Harriott, Everton Bostick and, most memorably of all, Barry "Sister" Lee, for whom he recorded a large number of hits.

Unlike many of his fellow singers he adapted well to new circumstances, even to the rhythms that ruled the dancehall during the 1980s. His flexible, inflected tenor has never hardened into a series of vocal tics and style-bound mannerisms. Hooking up with Massai Attack in 1990 brought him to the attention of a vast new audience beyond the fringes of reggae, and subsequent solo recordings with Mad Professor and Maf & Flay have extended his appeal.

In 1982, Andy recorded at Lloyd Barnes's Wackie House of Music in New York, and the sessions resulted in two albums: *Close Hall Style*, released by Wackies in the US, and *Exclusively*, which was taken up by Solid Groove, operating out of Leydon, England. Of the ten songs on *Exclusively*, four – "Lonely Woman", "Step The Fury", "Live In The City" and "Live In Unity" – can also be found on *Dance Hall Style*, where the last two songs have been given different titles (respectively, "Spilling Glass" and "It's Unic in Love"). The mixes on *Dance Hall Style* are substantially different to those on *Exclusively*, and all tracks on the former set extend into double length studio workouts. The duplication of certain songs would seem to suggest that only storage. Horace Andy fans should buy both albums, but each of these sets is distinctive in character and both are essential. *Dance Hall Style* is one of the strongest showcases albums from the early 80s (a period in which dub productions were entering a sharp decline), and *Exclusively* contains one of Andy's most sweetly seductive song sets, a highlight of which is a low key but affecting tribute to Bob Marley, who'd died just a few months earlier.

## ASGUARD

## DREAMSLAVE

THIS DANK REIGN CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

The continued vitality of Black Metal acts like Darkthrone and Gorgoroth, given as they are, is anomalous at best. For some time, fans of the genre have had to face the fact that evolution is unstoppable. Black Metal's fetish for sonic primordial, once its hallmark, has been abandoned by more and more up and coming acts who prefer to follow Dimmu Borgir and Cradle Of Filth down the path of John Williams and Danny Elman worship. Angard, a relatively unknown act from Belarus, combine Black Metal's charrus guitars with swooping synths and orchestral flourishes in exactly this way. Dreamslave's songs bleed blackness, frequently linked by keyboard chimes or taped hissing. The CD booklet divides the tracks into acts, like a play list, but since the lyrics are totally indecipherable, continuity must be inferred; the listener must give Angard the benefit of the doubt in that regard. The rhythm is relentless, triggered kick drums rule and boom, driving the music increasingly forward like a speeding train as the guitars – which, it should be mentioned, are much cleaner than is usual for Black Metal – roar and the string players (on loan from the Maglev Academy of Music) saw (anachronistically) their instruments. Dreamslave is no album for Black Metal's part-fanatical punks, who will find its 80s rock guitar sound and concessions to melody horrifying. But for the rest of us, it's an enjoyable suite of fist-pumping, Proggy heiness, stacking up just fine against the work of groups from countries people can actually locate on a map.

## ASIAN BEAUTY

## BEAUTIFUL ENDLESS LOOP

GLAZ CD

BY JEFF RILEY

Ami Yoshida is best known for her howling voice, where she uses her vocal cords to produce tiny, cracked sounds and often barely audible human noise. On these 30 tracks, recorded in her teens, she presents us with the vocal and instrumental origins of her later endeavours. Some of the pieces could hardly recall early Virgin Primes type experiments, while others are more gleeful and dance based (except that the tracks rarely last longer than a few minutes). Apart from her vocals, it's often difficult to work out what instruments are being played. It could be lapsteel based, or it could be manipulated tapes of keyboard instruments, though this hedges matters – it's the resultant music that counts. The several tracks where you can hear her howling voice at an early stage are fascinating, to say the least.

The album lives up to its promise of beautiful loops, but these are not slowly wobbling 'endless' compositions – rather, short, sharp shocks with the occasional aural scroll of video game effects thrown in too. *Beautiful Endless Loop* serves to provide a further, fascinating glimpse into Yoshida's sound world; indeed, the pieces she made as a teenager certainly point to a unique, passionately creative mind. At times the music edges towards the manic – but knowledge of her later work helps one understand that this is the sound of someone testing and arriving at herself.

## ATHEIST

## PIECE OF TIME

RELAPSE CD

UNQUESTIONABLE PRESENCE

RELAPSE CD

## ELEMENTS

RELAPSE CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

In Metal, the period from about 1988-93 corresponds to 1970-75 in rock: the years in which experimentation was rampant, and every wild idea was explored for at least an album side. Death Metal from the late 1980s and early 1990s is very different from the contemporary version. The blast beats, which nowadays propel every Death Metal track, were barely present on the genre's pioneering albums, instead, drummers maintained a thrasher, more groove-oriented rhythm that elicited toes to rock. Obtrusive bass, the bass and guitar lines weren't the down-tuned swamp rambles they are today, either – riffs and solos screamed skyward, as first-beat technique, rather than mere sonic punishment, was the ultimate measure of metal greatness. The disappointment many older listeners feel when enduring the work of contemporary, cookie-cutter Death Metal groups will likely be made even more palpable now that the *Atheist* catalogue is available again. From a technical standpoint, these Flanchards are the Mahavishnu Orchestra of Death Metal, but even during their lifetime they were no more than a cult act. Their three albums never got proper distribution upon release, but Relapse has purged some *Dimension* Escape Plan and Mastodon money into a set of well deserved reissues, remastering the original records and surrounding them with demos and live tracks.

The group's debut, 1990's *Piece of Time*, was an immediate leap forward for the genre, even in the light of contemporaneous releases like Death's *Human* and Pentagram's *Witness*. *Of The Ancients*, Bassist Roger Patterson wrote muscular, finger-busting riffs, around which guitarists Kyle Shaffer and Rand Buckley laid equally intricate melodic solos, all anchored and propulsed by Steve Flynn's fast but disciplined drumming. *Piece of Time* is augmented now by early demo takes, some of which contain versions of tracks never recorded for the album. The follow-up, *Unquestionable Presence*, saw a major leap in change: Patterson had been killed in a van accident on tour. Bassist Tony Chey of Cynic was brought in to make the record after the initial set was already written, though it retained the strong melodies that had marked the debut. *Unquestionable Presence* was a much more complex and Progressive album, every song reflecting through multiple tokyo time signatures and endless variations on already bedding riffs. The release adds pre-production demos (featuring Patterson), and the drums are basic tracks to the album's opening cut, "Mother Man"; so Metalheads can play along at home. The third and final *Atheist* album, 1993's *Elements*, somehow seems perfectly placed between the Prog fusion eruptions. The fury of the first two releases is tempered by a new introspection and an unwillingness to compromise even to the standards of the scene and genre that marked the group. All three of these albums contain brave and brilliant work, finally available to the wide audience it deserves.



Finding their religion, Paaohaju

## PAAOHARJU YHÄ HAMARÄÄ

RONALD CO

The Finnish musical underground thrives in part due to a communication network that bring artists and musicians from various regions of the country together, creating group genealogies as complex as the country's fluvial system of lakes and canals. Ystavat in particular, reside in arctic towns hundreds of miles apart and converse with sporadic regularity to cross-pollinate with each other's musical interests. The results are beguiling reconstructions of free improvisation, eternal drone theatrics, psychedelic explorations, DIY punk energy and anything else that strikes their fancy. Such has been the case for the small eastern town of Savonlinna, albeit on a much smaller and more localised scale. Paaohaju are one of the groups that hail from Savonlinna, which might only count a dozen like-minded musicians but features probably just as many projects depending on who is working with who. Nevertheless, Paaohaju have crafted a sound that is unique, even when held up to the self-determined Finnish aesthetics of Ista, Lau Nau and The Anaklasmades.

Revolving around the core of Lau Anttila, his brother Olli, Johannes 'Ragnar Rock' Pekkanen and Jenni Kivistönen, plus a handful of supplementary members, Paaohaju found a good home in Fonal Records for their debut album *Yhä Hämärää*. Translated as 'continually dark', the album fluctuates on the interplay between blissful abstractions and overt pop structures, particularly made apparent through the

talescopic vocalisations of Jenni Kivistönen. As the album opens with the creamy 'Ikuusuden Maalma', Paaohaju obscure ghostly flickers of Kivistönen's voice amid a snowy avalanche of delay-laden piano clusters, cheap electronics and crude ambience. If the album had continued accordingly, they could have successfully ventured down the path of imagined soundtracks from Jewelled Antler projects Thuga or The Franciscan Hobbes. However, the subsequent pop delirium of 'Velo Tikkua Kauken Läpi' reroutes any geographical analogy from San Francisco to Bombay, with Kivistönen revealing herself as the Finnish twin of Alesia Bhasie, with all of the Bollywood siren's enchanting dynamics and serpentine glossiness. It's not just Kivistönen's voice that makes this album, but also the inventive if simple arrangements for toy synth tones, acoustic guitar strum and tiny drum machine rhythms. While Kivistönen sings throughout the bulk of the album, several ancillary members of Paaohaju step up to the microphone on a few of the album's final numbers. Toni Kähkönen adds his mawin croon to a frantic acoustic guitar strum on 'Kujan Kausi', while choral lyricist Joonas Keskitalo purrs over a jubilant shuffle-bop beat on 'Musta Kätu', with canned horn beats and shimmering cascades of harpsichord smeared together in a crackly and warm, but ultimately bittersweet haze.

Paaohaju's eccentric production techniques reflect a similar pell-mell of home-taped experimentation

marred to pop ecstasy found in Anel Pirk's purposefully oddball recordings; however, these Finns could never be accused of taping into a borrowed nostalgia for American soft rock classics from

the 70s. Elements of their songwriting sensibility align themselves closer to Finnish and Russian pop aphorisms; but the bright-eyed earnestness that oozes from *Yhä Hämärää* is the fruit of their collective Christian beliefs, which they proclaimed in the few interviews they have given. As all of these songs are sung in Finnish, the content of Paaohaju's lyrics would probably escape most living outside of Finland. Even with the aid of a translation to English by label boss Sami Särpäkki on the Fonal website, the lyrics tend towards romantic imagery of situations and relationships that suit the album's incandescence. 'Velo Tikkua Kauken Läpi' ('Light Travels Through everything') holds the most overt Christian references, as Kivistönen sings to an unnamed divine being, praying that their divinity might wash and purify her soul. While Christianity is the source from which the members of Paaohaju draw their artistic strengths, they are not proselytising through their music. Lau Anttila explains, "Our lyrics may have some religious (Christian, of course) aspects, but mainly their purpose is to create visions, atmospheres and personal interpretations with other elements and layers of our songs."

Far from retreating to codified traditions of liturgical standards or recalling a shifty-faced sentimentality that smacks of irony, these Christian expressionists are a rare breed in this day and age. Paaohaju stand sincere in their belief that God gave them a gift in their ability to craft these psychedelic hymns that articulate complex and unusual revelations about God, themselves and the world. □





Tony Conrad in the 80s

### TONY CONRAD WITH FAUST

OUTSIDE THE DREAM SYNDICATE ALIVE  
TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CD

### TONY CONRAD

BRYANT PARK MORATORIUM RALLY (1969)  
TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CD

The German rock group Faust's first meeting with outlaw minimalist Tony Conrad was an inspired feat of cross-cultural engineering brokered by journalist and producer Uwe Nettlebeck. It was Nettlebeck who first flushed on the common aesthetic link between the 'standing waves' of Faust's rock redux and Conrad's alchemically keyed drone work. Their first collaboration was released on Virgin's Caroline subsidiary in 1973 and for many people it functioned as a first glimpse of the internal workings of The Dream Syndicate, the tank think tank that revolved around composer La Monte Young. Its members included Conrad, John Cage, Angus MacLise, Terry Jennings and Marian Zazeela, who had dedicated themselves to living inside eternal, barely fluctuating dream state music for days on end in search of the keys to the kingdom. Since then, the comparative deluge of Conrad-related archival material, his return to live performance and the relative availability of bootleg copies of various *Theater Of Eternal Music* recordings have afforded a whole new historical perspective that inevitably takes a little of the sheen from that first Conrad/Faust hook-up. Prior to the meeting, Faust had osmosed the experiments of Conrad, Young et al via the conductive rock moves of The Velvet Underground, adding industrial power repetition, manipulated tapes and a stoned barbershop chorus in the subversive/surrealist style then favoured by European avant rock outfits like Prague's Plastic People Of The Universe. Their first pow-wow, then, should have been a reacquaintance with the source minus any mediating rock influence. Listening again,

however, to the original mix, it's obviously weighted more towards the rock logic of the Faust rhythm section of drummer Werner 'Zappi' Diermeier and bassist Jean-Hervé Peron than Conrad's normally brain-splitting violin, which doesn't sound nearly as psychoactive as it does in the wild. Conrad later complained that the mix made him 'sound like a happy'. Maybe Virgin were already operating under the faulty assumption that would eventually give birth to the *Faust Tapes* campaign; that with a bit of canny marketing, Faust could well be the soundtrack of choice for the UK's teenage heads. Fast forward two decades and Conrad sets up a rematch with Faust, this time armed with second violinist and fellow Faust collaborator Jim O'Rourke. Their play three shows, the best of which is widely judged to be the final performance at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London that took place on 18 February 1995, now made available in full by Table Of The Elements.

Here Conrad and O'Rourke's violins sound like twin beams of intense, endlessly refracted light, with the substitution of even the slightest microtöne functioning to zigzag the focus of the music somewhere else entirely. When drummer Diermeier finally makes his entrance after an impossibly extended build-up, the effect is almost comedic, with Conrad and O'Rourke's dense, diamond-shape tone shackled with a rhythm that feels like the equivalent of a pre-articulate caveman ugh. But it's precisely this combination of brain-splitting clarity and monosyllabic rhythmic thrust – of earth and space magic – that gives the music much of its elemental power. Conrad's instructions to the Faust rhythm section was to 'keep the beat steady', but both Peron and Diermeier can't resist inserting the odd covert phrase, the urge to rock/payoff evidently not completely extinct. The dynamic proves to be highly infectious, with the result that both Conrad and O'Rourke tighten their grip on

**David Keenan welcomes two archive releases that relocate Tony Conrad deep inside the Dream Syndicate**

the violin, bowing just that little bit harder and playing with the kind of emphatic energy that turns a drone into a riff. Parts of the performance bear uncanny similarities to the Heavy Metal emanations of New York conceptualists like Roxy Chisholm and Glenn Branca. In the claustrophobic calm between the end of 'From The Side Of Man And Womankind' (which Peron signals by smashing a brick with a sledgehammer) and the start of 'Encore!', some Northern punk yells out, 'Fuck you, you middle class prick!' in the direction of an audience member who'd had enough, and was getting up to leave. Imagining this might be directed at himself, Conrad's musical response for the encore is reassuringly clumsy: play fucking loud.

Conrad's minimalism was always political and tied up in relative notions of time and its suspension, as well as using sounds and tunings that subvert and undermine traditional power structures, best illustrated by one of his major modern works, 1969's *Stopping Pythagoras*. The newly unearthed Bryant Park Moratorium Rally (1969) functions as a tangential investigation of aspects of his thought applied to two simultaneous sonic events relating to the Vietnam War and the complementary and antagonistic interaction between them. Originally made available as a free, Internet-only MP3 file at the eve of the US invasion of Iraq, 2003, it consists of a single 50 minute recording made by Conrad back in 1969 using two microphones, one pointing out the window of his fifth floor loft on 42nd Street recording the Vietnam Moratorium Rally on 15 October, the other directed at a television news channel. Given the length of the recording, it's difficult to stay tuned to the actual content of the various overlapping sonic events, with the result that the two sides soon blur into a synthesised flux, with the beautiful sound of the people united against faustian fucks obliterated by the mind-erasing chatter of media fiction. □

With Campfire Headphase, their first album for three years, the duo have escaped the womb-like warmth and dense, enveloping textures of Geogaddi in favour of airy melodies and relaxed guitar strumming, sources which are then artfully aged through fuzz and phase. However, the duo only get halfway to creating the sonic enigmas they intend. Making the ear search for origins of sounds that actually are carefully laid down in intriguing play of vertical layers, but this spell is broken by song structures that are barely less predictable or generic than mouldy old tramp-top. Perversion is often played live, yet mostly sounds like a drum machine on cruise control. The guitar figures are no more adventurous than a noodle checking the tuning.

The swelling strings of "Dayyan Cowboy" recall the top of Massive Attack's *Mazeppa* – sluggish melancholy masquerading as perfunctory. There is considerable respite in the last 15 minutes of the album. Being beatless, they feel immeasurably more imaginative and less repulsive than the preceding 13 tracks. But, sadly, much of the Campfire Headphase is like sitting through an interminable demonstration of a million Photoshop-style filter effects.

## VASHTI BUNYAN LOOKAFTERING

NET CAT CD

BY DAVID KEEGAN

Vashti Bunyan's reputation as one of the UK's most supernaturally beautiful folk song stylists is based on just one stellar album, 1970's *Just Another Diamond Day*, recorded by Witchseason producer Joe Boyd with members of the Incredible String Band and Fairport Convention. With Bunyan's subsequent disappearance, this sublime recording took on the air of a mysterious farewell to the world in much the same way as the still unreleased Steeleye Macdonald's two albums for BBC. But Bunyan returned to the spotlight in the late 90s with the encouragement of a new group of admirers and since has worked with Animal Collective, Devendra Banhart and Steve Mallon. *Lookaftering* is the first new collection since her return, and it feels as seamlessly connected to the source as her debut.

Despite a lit of big-deal guests that runs as long as your patience (the aforementioned Banhart, Joanna Newsom et al), the other player's contributions are suitably transparent, with most tracks assembled around Bunyan's translucent, barely-there vocal, accompanied by piano or guitar. The atmosphere is of an evocative rain-soaked meadow, the same kind of spiced silver glades previously illuminated by the likes of Joni Mitchell and Linda Perhacs. The subtly ornate arrangements work to locate it deep in the heart of a very English landscape. The use of French horn in particular gives it a hint of the backwoods brioque flavoured by Cyril chow (Levi's Secret Donan).

That comparison becomes even more overt on the piano tracks, where her slightly mannered vocals sound a lot like Deric signing Baby Bee. But despite a plethora of stylized synapses, *Lookaftering* manages to transcend both the circumstances of its birth and the time in which it was recorded. As an atmospheric slot of temporally dislocated folk art, it sits perfectly alongside *Just Another Diamond Day*.

## NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS THE PROPOSITION

MURK CD

This is not Nick Cave's first musical involvement with film. In 1988 he contributed both dialogue and a score to John Hillcoat's *Gods... Of The Civil Dead*. For *The Proposition*, Cave wrote the screenplay and, with violinist Warren Ellis (The Dirty Three, the Bad Seeds), this soundtrack. Set in 19th century Australia, the film is a bleak parable concerned with many of Cave's recurring themes – murder, love, regret and revenge – in which two outlaw brothers kill a third to save their own lives.

The music is as bleak and stripped down as the film, swinging between brief sexual tangos, such as the title track and "The Rider", Ellis's violin is the backbone of most of these sketches. Occasionally it's multiplied into a resonant swirl ("Quome's Theme"), or soaring over folk drone ("The Rider 2"). More often it is mournfully alone – even when accompanied by ghostly touches of piano, guitar or vocals – murmured at the cusp of audibility. Only rarely do Cave and Ellis include any sound unlistenable in the 19th century, such as the muted growl of a reversed bassline.

The tracks' construction vary from improvised responses to specific scenes to the manipulation of loops constructed by Ellis. Nonetheless, there is a real coherence to these 18 tracks, bound by a spectral sense of narrative conjured through the resonance of "The Proposition" and "The Rider". The soundtrack makes musical nods to Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music and (in spirit, more than sound), the desert elegies of Neil Young's soundtrack for Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*. With Ellis's help, Cave has squared the circle of the filmic elements within his work.

## GREG DAVIS & STEVEN HESS DECISIONS

LONGBOOK CD

BY DAVID HANFEE

Laptop processor and Autumn Records founder Greg Davis collaborates here with percussionist Steven Hess, best known for his work with Pan American and Grappa Ensemble, among others, but his contribution to these pieces is so mercurial that one could be forgiven for not recognizing that there is percussion on these recordings – his gong noise and insectoid clicks being easily mistaken for the crackly clouds of sound emanating from Davis's laptop. The virtual interchangeability of sounds generated by software or the most analogue musical act of all – hitting something – is a consistently fascinating feature of this music. On pieces like "042903[09]", synthetic sonics bubble up in the spaces between Hess's drum beats. And anyone intent on playing 'spot the sound' would be hard pressed to identify if that recurrent base note is an electronic piano or a ton-tom struck with a soft-ended stick.

While such mere overt statements are ironically more compelling, some of these duets the musicians exhibit an extraordinary poise – elegance, almost – while crafting an improvised dialogue of great subtlety. Coming from what sounds like dislocated clockwork systems communicating with each other, the rhythmic ratiocines on "060003[11]" open out into a

lascivious discourse between the two musicians, while "060003[15]" comes over like the musical equivalent of Bretonnian moon, or processes taking place on a subatomic level.

He bows his symbols on "041803[04]", adding a metallic sizzle as the laptop emits a sequence of signals that's as near as this set comes to temporal music. The lengthy close, "041803[07]", comes from a similar soothsayer, Davis's laptop raises the listener with a hard-edged signal that keeps coming around like a lighthouse beam, which starts to disintegrate as the piece comes to a close.

## DJ / RUPTURE LOW INCOME TOMORROWLAND

TAX CD

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

DJ /rupture's original breakthrough, 2001's present *Gold Rush Trail*, was the most accurate soundtrack to the devastation and confusion of the 11 September attacks, one which succeeded in astutely embracing the full global picture at a time when all eyes were on the USA. Exploiting the excellent *Minneapolis Suite*, *Low Income Tomorrowland* was originally commissioned by the highly regarded *Lenin Red Weblog*. This signals the continuing impact of blogs, as well as accounting for the disc's less limned fringes. It's as if, without the pressure of delivering a CD proper, DJ /rupture has produced something something personal and adventurous. Indicated here, among other improbabilities, is a Tazzy Chapman remake. Picking highlights is almost crass, so intermeshed and multi-layered is the mix. With DJ /rupture opting for Grime producer Skepta's remix of NARS' "Put Up The People" above the original mix, the provenance of his tunes is confusing. *Gold-Rush's* "Old Skool Armageddon" is reminiscent ragga-Jungle, with hi-hat-edged dancehall samples spiced over steaming Arica beats. The simile is somewhat aptly given by DJ /rupture, overlaying Brian Eno's title classic "Dive Away". This will is self-reliant, highlighting a sense of existential mordaciousness in the post-catastrophe era, it is the collection's meta-philosophical point.

The CD credits somewhat tellingly list *Low Income Tomorrowland*'s 'main ingredients', for to breakdown its individual components would presumably take too long. These include the fluid nimble lope of David Banner's "Crack It Up", the still glowing soulder on the tracks of Kumbia's "Backward Country Boy Explosive", Susie's satisfyingly coarse rasp, the unlikingly earwringing gimboids. It's particularly heartening to see DJ /rupture embrace London's Grime, making him as the angle globetrotting intermissionalist DJ to be equal to its undisputed power. The undeterred East Coaster's "We're Ready" and Jammer cohort Lee White's "I & AM" feature in *Low Income Tomorrowland*. The 'CD plus' format allows DJ /rupture to sneak in a set he turned in at Hamburg's BTB FM. Even hearing him on Grime, it also takes in his usual coordinates of Crunk, dancehall, the music of the North African Muslim continuum and Squeawone.

## ALEX DÖRNER & JIM DENLEY DISTINCTIONS

SHUT CD #1

BY BRAIN MORTON

Alex Dörner didn't make his first solo CD until 2001. He picked the right label for it, though. A

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# Soundcheck

Bruit Secret is almost a description of the ultra-quiet language of breath sounds and mrioseopic gestures he makes on his Holton slide trumpet. Fascinating as that was, Domér is probably better known for his association with others — guitarist Kevin Drumm, cellist Fred Lerdberg-Holm on 2003's *Object 1*, and now Australian fiddler/saxophonist Jim Denley. Domér's an almost vanishingly quiet place. My instinct is that Denley deploys his saxophones more often on the than on some projects (see his own *Dark Matter* or *Vergory*) but it's very difficult to determine whether sounds are made by brass valves, wood, or simply by the players' breath. There are also soft rips and sneers that sound as if electronic processing might have taken place, though none is credited, so I guess not.

Beyond the technical level, Domér's has a moodily miened that pulls you ever inward towards the speakers to catch every slight inflection and every moment of not quite silence. I switched to headphones for a second listen, and bigger man, there's a whole other spectrum of sound buried away in there. It's an astonishing record, one that deserves the widest possible circulation. How you'd go about sourcing it, though, no idea. No address, no Website given.

## DOUBLE LEOPARDS OUT OF ONE, THROUGH ONE AND TO ONE

ECLIPSE LP

BY NARO MASTERS

It's hard to quantify the singular talents of Brooklyn quartet Double Leopards. While the music can be summed in one simple word — *DROME* — the specific tools that distinguish the group from other well of noise makers are harder to identify. Out Of One, Through One And To One explores aspects of the best noise merchants — the stony heavnness of Phill Niblock, the scraping intensity of Tim Conroy — but there's something different about Double Leopards' rives of thickened noise. Maybe it's the heavy use of vocals, or the unique physical approach (the group squat over equipment like artists scrawling on pavement). Or maybe it's just that, over numerous releases and performances, the group's massive emanations have developed an impenetrable noisefulness.

Like the epic 2003 double LP *Reverie Mean*, Out Of One was recorded at Brooklyn's Raw Books Room under the approving eye of Samson Labekis, but otherwise the two albums are quite different. Where on *Reverie Mean* individual sound elements like rattles, ches and feedback were often clear, Out Of One is more mucky and melted, burying its parts under a dark, seaflooring lowness. As a result, the album's two unitled, side-length tracks are stunningly dense, with whos, moans and creeping rhythms that sound more like the ghosts of dead sounds than evidence of living ones.

One side starts with a gravelly sotle that patiently dissolves into a distant, high-pitched echo, evoking the "Jupiter And Beyond The Infinite" section of Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey if it were projected onto an ocean floor. The longer second side is even more chilling, with echoing cycles and faded sconses so heavy and disorienting they seem to reduce weariness. Out Of One might not convert any non-

believers, but Double Leopards' subtle shift toward more shadowy territory indicates they have many more prayers to preach.

## THE DRIFT

### NOUMENA

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

BY SAM DAWINS

The Drift are a San Francisco quartet comprising trumpet, guitar, upright bass and drums, who make lovely, loose-limbed pastoral instruments. If the instrumental textures and unmissable jazz and dub influences suggest the Chicago scene of Tortoise et al., it's not long before the group's ensemble playing locates them more accurately as inherents of the open-ski, wide-eyed wonder of West Coast forbears like The Grateful Dead. This debut album eschapes the anomalies of reference and influence to which post-rock can succumb, and instead conjures up plain art-forward-thinking pleasure.

"Gardening, Not Architecture" sets the tone, opening the album over 11 assembling minutes. Perhaps the title is an oblique manifesto, describing the way these long pieces amold organically rather than to any predetermined, pre-planned structure. They basalily have identifiable parts or sections, but rather regions, into which the instruments migrate by degrees. And this applies to individual notes as much as to whole tracks. The trumpet playing of Jeff Jaccard has led to comparisons with Miles Davis circa *In A Silent Way* (no doubt suggested in part by the jazz-infused atmospheres and slow-burn durations), an overstated comparison, but Jacobs (The Davis) is clever with space. He allows notes to hang long in the air as they decay softly through the mix. Dimey Godby's keys on "Transitions" are similarly spare, and they signify all the more for it. Godby is usually on guitar, cooing it into swells and shudders through dense haloes of delay. At other times he has a lovely, chiming clarity, picking out unfussy arpeggios. Rob Doult on drums and Sali Shakira meanwhile fit together some grooves that persuade the album tumbling into a succession of expressive atmospheres.

The Drift reportedly took two years building up to recording *Hopeful*; it's now set to hit the studio and they'll produce more of these gorgeous stretches of ensemble lyrism sometime before 2007.

## ERUPTION

### ERUPTION

OHIO LP

BY DAVID KETMAN

Eruption were a multidisciplinary freeform ensemble put together by cellist, violinist and early electronic improviser Conni Schmidler in 1970 as an adjunct to his work with Kraut behemoths Tangerine Dream and Kuster. They seem to have functioned more as a think tank for the then-explosive Krautrock than as a straightforward gigging group, with a revolving membership that at points included members of Embryo, Ash & Tempel and Agitation Free. Details of Eruption's Berlin actions have appeared in more comprehensive German rock histories, but up until now there has been no zedie documentation, making Qobuz's archival unearthing of a 1970 live performance from Studio Freijudmann, Berlin all the more significant.

Although the picture on the back features footage of a big band show with members of Aron Dzial and Ash Ra Tempel, the LP documents a two set solo from Schmidler, Wolfgang Seidel and Klaus Freudenthal that is much more punk than the group's links to such cults of kosmische bootload might suggest. The music starts out fairly fragmented, with sustained violin strokes caught in a mix of scatological oratorio, short passages of silence and wowing effects. Although it feels a little tentative at first, this slightly more deliberate approach is borne of a hard-thinking improvisatory ethos, based more on exploring aspects of interactive dialogue than free rock jazz, but after the parameters of the exchange have been fully established, the trio start to move the music out, with tracks based around oscillating analogue tones, feral violin and distorted interviewized voices that sound uncannily like the feedback purr of Dylan Nykro's *Blood Stereo* and Dezer Prings.

Side two feels a little more of its time — a good thing — with fuzz-warm, organ and drums generating circular hymns to that are as ferociously monolithic as anything by Klaus Dinger's *La Désolée!* The inspired combination of rock dynamics, freely improvised dialogue and maimanded electronics make this the another one of those historically appealing releases that captures a moment of conceptual recognition decades before it would be fully assimilated. But at the jawdropping final considerations aside, Eruption makes for a thrilling stand-alone node.

## EXPERIMENTAL AUDIO

### RESEARCH

WORD TO A SHADOW

LUMBERTON TRADING COMPANY CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Established in 1990, CAR has served as a side project for Soen Boom to extend his ideas towards some kind of resolved conclusion, and such serves as a useful darkroom within which to develop his more vingtage sonic snapshots. What was once only a flicker became a prototyped change of light.

The first four pieces collected together on *Word To A Shadow* share a relaxed simplicity that is quite unsettling over prolonged periods of exposure, set the least because some of them display any obvious traces of fixed repetition, looping or sequencing. Instead each comprises an overlapping sequence of leisurely cadences, often involving basses generated by such analogue strategies as the EMS synth ARS and the VCS3.

The title track is the longest, a slowly evolving work of shifting textures and phased notes that works its rather languid magic over 24 minutes. "Delan Larment," as the title suggests, comes across as a touching and respectful tribute to the late great Dola Derbyshire, one of the finest electronic music composers this country has produced. As well as referencing her 1968 composition "The Delta Mode" from the first BBC Radiophonic Music collection, it also contains discernible echoes of Derbyshire's classic "Blue Wells And Golden Sands," originally recorded for a television documentary on the sandbank tribes of the Sahara. Meanwhile "Blue Loop" and "Off The Deep End" retain a similarly languorous feel, conveying the haunted impression that Soen Boom is somehow reaching back to a sense of what electronic

music should have sounded like.

That may not seem very forward-looking, but it does act as an impressive reminder of where we've come from. It never hurts to adjust the rear view mirror now and again.

## FIELDWORK

### SIMULATED PROGRESS

PCD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

Fieldwork started life as a three-way collaboration, but it's beginning to feel more like The Verve, too, as it's the only original member left on this second release. Alto saxophonist Steve Lehman has replaced Aaron Stewart and drummer Elliot Hayes has departed since the recording, with Tyshawn Sorey taking his place. *Simulated Progress* is a music-is-sounding disc, produced and engineered by Scott Hord (best known as Softy Hard, a former *WordSound* and *New Kingdom* collaborator).

He gives Kwon's drums a pleasing bit of extra thump, filling the low-end space vacated by the absence of a bassist. On the third track, "Tipp," a weird effect makes them sound pleasingly antielectric. Ayer's got a light touch on the keyboard; he's been the gleaming center of a number of discs on which he's guested, including several Burnt Sugar albums and Rudresh Mehta's *Mother Tongue*. In the absence of a bassist, he's required to indicate chordal structure for each piece while adding slyness and midlife ornamentation, and he balances both with dashness and a quick, railest his interactions with Lehman are high exultations of the post-bop art form, reminiscent of the dances between Greg Hiley and Jason Moran.

The shortest track on the disc, "Telematic," is also one of the most interesting, adopting an almost Latin rhythm that creates plenty of opportunities for each player to assume a temporary lead role, all in less than three minutes. Though there's plenty of free playing here, as so much of Fieldwork is interested in the extreme clichés of live jazz, no screaming, no pounding of the keyboard, no smacking and slashing of the drums and cymbals. Their music is a graceful, yet sturdy sort of chamber jazz, consistently surprising and unique without pressing the issue.

## JASON FORREST

### SHAMELESSLY EXCITING

SOMA CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Jason Forrest recorded as Donna Summer until the expected lawsuit action was threatened. Nevertheless, this obsessive geometer from Brooklyn is still a man of her Master period. Lately he has been recording at his太阳 named Cook Rock Discos studio in Berlin.

Forrest could easily be dismissed as a tasteless monon. It took a live show to get me to listen more closely to his accelerated pianostrophes of sample theft. Belonging to the emerging genre of pub laptop, he is the first computer operator I've ever seen taking breaks from his screen for a spell of running errands in the moonlight. He's a laid-back purr, infecting the crowd with his unquestioning enthusiasm, punching the air and shaking his jellied body.

A cynical view would be that Forrest merely snatches elements of his favorite crudely music

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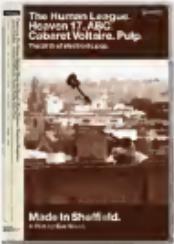
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# Soundcheck

and finally lumps them together into sped-up incarnations, crammed with his own manic beat programming. But Forest actually has a hidden sensitive nature. Paying attention to detail in his selection process, he applies a delicate surgical precision to his constructions. Pee-wee Metal and mirrorball disco are his favorite areas to plunder. His collage stitching, chopped and broken guitar riffs with tiny arcade game twists that might just be his own keyboard contributions. Croch-clutching vinyl scratches receive the same treatment.

David Grubbs contributes piano to the opening "The Walls of The City Shave", but it's not a major part of this compacted wonderment. A popular Cook Rock Discs technique is to alternate folksy acoustic guitar dishes with ramming Metal riffs. Like the title says, "My 36 Favorite Punk Songs" apparently does work, though and number in just over two minutes, and still doesn't sound too crowded.

Country singer Laura Cantrell guests on "Hedgehoppers And Headphones", Forest's bid for Top 40 success, even if its bouncy style still features a fair share of bumbling twists and turns. And Forest's other guest, singer Maja Ratke, closes the disc with a repetitive folk chime.

Forest represents a new generation of plundephobics artists, an affiliate conceptualist, hiding in a hoodlum's home

## GATE TO GATE I TURN BLACK KEYS

BY MARCI MASTERS

Though its catalogue numbers fewer than 20, Hollywood's P!NCH is quickly becoming a vital submersion noise label. Emptifying efforts by Yellow Swans, Nine Mind and Wolf Eyes' Aarau Detwyer have certainly started, but the best P!NCH release to date is the digital debut of *Gate to Gore*, a collaboration between Mike Connolly (of Hear Police and new Wolf Eyes) and Bold and Bright's Wolf Eyes. *Gate to Gore* offers cuts from two limited edition cassettes plus one new title track, nearly 80 minutes of merciless noise.

The title track continues *I Turn Black Keys*, running for a staggering 38 minutes. Somehow Connolly and Bright maintain forward momentum throughout, kneading absurd sounds into a noisy ride. It's a rollercoaster whirling through a blurry haunted house. The noise just keeps coming, refusing to pause for breath. The resulting effect is both penetrating and soothing, like footage of a rolling ocean played at blinding speed. Near the end, the sirens bleed across the static space until the track finally collapses under its own frantic weight.

Two tracks from their base cassette continue the assault, adding a hyper pulse that recalls Borewoms' *Yamabiko Eye* at its most hysterical. Only on the first half of "House With The Clock In Its Walls" does space creep into Gate to Gore's well of screen. Evoking a drunken robot stumbling through an empty prison, it writes randomly and echoes hypnotically. It's the least oppressive part of the album, but even the most suffocating stretches of *I Turn Black Keys* are

enlivened by the thick, nasal blood coursing through the group's inextricable veins.

## CARLOS GIFFONI

### WELCOME HOME

IMPORTANT CD

BY MARCI MASTERS

With Mandoest and Did Bombs, his numerous collaborations with cohorts like Lee Ranaldo and Dylan Rykous, and his genre-blurring No Fun Festival, Celos Giffoni has become one of the most vital spires in the grey American noise wheel. Since moving from Miami to Brooklyn a few years ago, the Venezuelan has been supremely prolific, but solo releases have been rare. *Welcome Home* represents three years of one-man sonic explosion, with 12 tracks of blindingly pure, surprisingly fiery sound.

Most of *Welcome Home* is aggressive, repetitive noise, which Giffoni deviously hones and regenerates. It's amazing how much sonic tempi he can cover through simple, rapid-fire blasting. His hyper-junctive has precedents in the manic crescendo of Wolf Eyes, the bounding joys of Shizuo, even the dense sheer of Hekler and Fennez. But the intricate textures of Giffoni's abrasive din is distinctive. His sounds are so live and detailed they're nearly molecular, as if recorded through a microscope.

The opening track sets the album's frantic tone, thick static and frantic glches pile into a towering mound. "Atode Events" attacks the ears from all angles, like a hearing test devised to punish its patients, while the drilling bottles of "Expectations" feel roughly like sticking your head in the main slot of an 80s video game. Later, the squeaky edges of the aptly titled "Synapses" resemble elevated mice fighting over a sliver of cheese. The only relief here is this penetrating ruber comes in two collaborations, "Inradias", a duet with Peter Reinhart, builds to a monstrous drone, while "The Bold And The Mad", forged with fellow Old Bone Dino Felipe, bathes contemplative tones in warm distortion. Still, most of *Welcome Home* is like a row of sonic machine guns aimed directly at the head, leaving the impression that Giffoni's sonic arsenal is in as danger of being depleted.

## HISATO HIGUCHI

2004 11 2005 4

GHOST DISC CD

BY JOHN DALE

Though he has been recording for six years, Japanese musician Hisato Higuchi has released little music. So far he has produced one EP, *She*, and appeared on the PSF label's *Tokyo Rebirth 5* and WFMU's *Twenty Nasty One Second* compilations. This difference suits Higuchi's music, which is as gorgeous as it is erratic. His music is a complex pattern of stasis, and as mated as a stereo speaker beamed up in an edict.

2004 11 2005 4 is an appropriately programmatic title for Higuchi's debut album, a collection of live recordings from the past year. The first three songs capture Higuchi alone with his guitar, snapping the throat two chord blues phrases, putting them through a primitive sampling pedal and then placing graweghaw slow threads of notes along the even horizon. The closest parallel for his music would be blues guitarist Loen Connors, as both artists share a fondness for sanguineous melodies that swim through an analogue recording fog like fish

through molasses. But Higuchi's touch leans less on traditionally emotive playerly conceits like vibrato; instead, he draws each note from the instrument with minimum fuss. When he does shoot into more loaded spaces, as in the distorted fuzz solo that opens the closing track "Manazashi", he still broadcasts from a clouded fog. Any accompaniment is sparing – Sadafumi Sugai collaborates on sampler for one piece, and Yutaka Suzuki's drumming adds slow, muffled strokes to the longest compositions on the disc.

Sit somewhere between Connors's quavering blues and the cold light of Ray Nance's quietest guitar and voice recordings, Higuchi's music manifests a unique and singular conception. It breathes slowly, almost to the point of stillness, an eerie voice and flinty guitar searching for quiet revelation.

## EZEKIEL HONIG &

### MORGAN PACKARD

EARLY MORNING MIGRATION

MICRODISC MUSIC CD

BY JOHN DALE

This first collaboration by North Americans Honig and Packard has refused to give up its complexities after days of repeated playing. Ezekiel Honig confesses that the pieces on the CD are inspired by weather and nature, but also conceal a blizzard of musical creature sources and treated domestic sounds that would even confound a serial avant-garde noise nuttire hour. Honig further confesses that some of the treated noises include cracked plastic bottles, rain, microphone stands, falling over, croaking tree frogs (shea John Cage's *Zoetek*) and other improbable sound sources.

The first impression of the mesmerizing *Early Morning Migration*, augmented by sonorous, tomboi, guitar, bass and other conventional instruments, is that it is compatible to John Adams's early minimalist/electro work, *Light Over Water*, but then the layers in Honig and Packard's work begin to reveal themselves. They're already being remixed on the US electro underground scene. The beautiful architecture of their music evokes unlikley but appropriate comparisons with Duke Ellington and Gil Evans. However, they're also inventing improvisors, playing out live with an improvising computer video artist. If you ever anything by Autechre or Seefield, you've yourself a copy of the haunting, richly textured and multilayered music.

## ICARUS

### CARNIVALESCUE

NOT APPLICABLE CD

BY JOHN DALE

Here's something unusual – a free electronic recording that will make you chuckle, something that hasn't happened in this household since AMM's *It Was An Arduous Enough Day* in Pueblo, Colorado. There are two possible explanations for this. One is that the day of Ollie Brown and Sam Britton is idiots savants who have arrived at a solidifying approximation of post-Darmstadt electronics by accident. The other is that they are so steeped in Stockhausen, Cage, Bausler, Subotnick et al that they can do this stuff in their sleep. Given that they called their last album *I Tweet The Body Electro*, I suspect it's the latter.

From the processes Brown and Britton set in motion, it's clear that they know their Iemusik and Gesang Der Jünglinge. But they're actually

reinventing them in the manner of Baxxer's *Primo Menudo*, author of the identical *Don Quixote* to the original – except they round those 90s classics using new technology and dance beats. It has all those soi-dis-pops, jingles and squeaks of electro, but fed through a dancelike sensibility that sometimes veers on the freneticism of hammonies (of Dmetri Coleman's *Dance in Your Head*). But given that their packaging ethos is all about *causal* (my reading of the credits), the inspiration might, in fact be Flann O'Brien.

## JAN JELINEK

### KOSMISCHER PITCH

SCAPE CDLP

BY CHRIS SHARP

Jan Jelinek is a sonic butterfly, flitting unpredictably from inclination to inclination, offering an unexpected shift of emphasis with each successive release. He's recorded as Gramm and as Falben, invented a fictional backing group (*The Exposed*) and embarked on a series of collaborative ventures – but, with the possible exception of 1-9-1 – made with the Australian electro/lojazz crew Trisk – he hasn't quite made a completely satisfying record, until now.

If not a companion piece as such, *Kosmischer Pitch* shares something of its approach with 2001's *Loop Flying Jazz Records*. But whereas that album imagined on strung out, atomized fragments of jazz, with surface noise, droplets and hiss treated as much a part of the source material as the music – *Kosmischer Pitch* is an altogether masterful experience, inspired and informed by the cosmic music made in early 1970s Germany. Tangente, Dresen, Ash Ra Tempel and Popol Vuh made some astonishing music, motivated in part by a yearning for transcendence and escape. Jelinek – constructing his music from digitally processed loops and the most microscopic of sampled snippets – conveys a similar sense of radiant progression and immersing bliss.

"Luminolimide 1" is typically arakawka: a slow-building, stirred collage of pleasure-centre triggers. Starting with half-occluded, percussive guitars and a seepingly loik of static, the track enlivens itself upon interlocking layer of rhythmic noise as it gathers momentum, sweetened by ascending flurries of brrsding. "Im Desoekpekt" is groover still, as Jelinek mixes barking, swirling white noise and rhythmy banzaiwashed percussion with a cavernous, hazy organ dose worthy of Terry Riley.

During *Kosmischer Pitch*, there's often an arcane sense that these sturdy, architectural constructions are sometimes peopled, out there, and that the record is a floating portal that merely suggests the overdriving, resplendent whole. But more often still – as in the opening, surging "Universel Band Söhnsaut" – there's little more than simple physical acouslichkeit, like the cosmic compositions. It delicately references, *Rossmoor* Pitch is positive that the higher and lower pleasures can triumphantly combine.

## THE KALLIKAR FAMILY

MAY 23RD 2007

TELL-A-LLA CD

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

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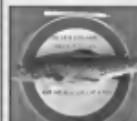
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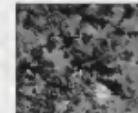
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No Fun festivals and collaborating with the  
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he's been slowly recording this debut album.



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inserts into the theme of "Hypocrisie et Révolte" (originally "Hypocrisie et Révolte") is like a compass wire to an old friend. In this third Zorn-produced solo album after 1994's *Who's Bridge* (Avant) and 1997's *No Idea* (DW), the bassist is once more Greg Cohen, but the drummer here is occupied by Ben Perowsky, best known for his work with Un Canne.

Seasoned Mania fans won't be surprised to find a number of Mengelberg standards crop up ("Reef and Kneebus", "Brozerman"), most of them plodding amably along at the pianist's now familiar slightly stodgy midtempo. The element of danger comes not from the music's lurking on the edge of the abyss plunging into total disintegration (though many infrequent Mengelberg cuttings, notably where he's joined by Han Bennink on drums, have instead gone right over the edge), but from the pianist's uncanny ability to find the right woe notes and follow them wherever they lead. Mengelberg's sprightly partners can either zy and tag along, hoping they'll all eventually find their way back to the fold, or sit doggedly on the changes and wait for him to drift back, which he inevitably does, often when they're least expecting it. Cohen and Perowsky are remarkably good at doing both. Mengelberg's music remains a questionable example of how recognizable idioms — from the pianist's beloved baroque counterpart to the Ellingtonian bare-fist left-hand plunks and Monkish whole-tone flurries — can be extended and subverted in an authentic, *jeu de notes* of the highest order. For all its whimsical humour, *Sente Sing Song* is both musically profound and profoundly musical.

### ROMAN MINTS GAME OVER

CHARTZ CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

It's a surprise that the splendidly named Roman Mints signs off his stevenesque *Game Over* with a wistful admission: "This is," he writes referring to an album comprising mostly of pieces dedicated to him, "probably as close as I will ever get to being a rock musician." Which begs the question: How exactly does Mints expect a rock album to sound like? Even in their most purple moments, Redbadish don't go for the kind of violent upheavals conjured up here.

In its use of solo violin and electronics, *Game Over* is a virtuous album. Mints is a Rossini-born violinist who has studied and worked in London for some years, during which he has established himself as one to watch on the contemporary classical scene. Mints is joined by a trio, but their place seems often to delineate the sonic space from which he can escape. Containing six works by four composers — Ed Bennett, Artem Vassiev, Tessa Burevsky and Alexander Ralik elson — *Game Over* is an elemental place, characterized not only by high drama, but also delicacy. Mints has us with for the latter. Ralik elson's 13 minute *Chiroptophore* piece plus edgy piano playing against a storm of electronics. Ed Bennett's *String Factory* has a patterning, skittery melody of sorts rhythmically blown away by gusts of incisive sound, before, in its closing minutes, allowing a high register violin line to work itself out. It's the luminous nature of Burevsky's *Largo Ricercate*, an instrumental that, for the first time, allows tonality into the album that is most captivating,

and it is this harmonic space that lingers, even after the jarriness of Vassiev's title work have died away.

### MOONDOG

#### MOONDOG

HONEST JOHN 8 CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

In Kansas in 1918, Louis T. Haidin became Moondog, the street musician and landmark, when he moved to New York in the 1940s Blinded in an accident in his teens, he wrote music in braille and made his own instruments. He played the dragon's teeth drum and timbales on the corner of 54th and Avenue so regularly the spot became known as Moondog Corner. This collection spans from his earliest 1930s at the tail end of the 40s through to the recordings made after he moved to Germany in 1974 in the 25 years before his death. Most, however, are from the late 50s and 60s when Beats and hippies adopted the hobo composer as an icon. He appeared with Alice Coltrane, Leroy Braxton, William Barisano and Tiny Tim. Charlie Parker wanted to record with him. His philosophy of "maximum effect with minimum means" inspired Phil Glass and Steve Reich.

Although self-taught, his compositions are full of informed formal experimentation. The discipline in his music inspired conductor Arthur Rodnitzky to ask Moondog to Carnegie Hall from his regular spot outside to sit in on rehearsals. His exploration of rhythm is best exemplified by "From One To Nine", as chimes spike in the background, the hand drums move from 1/4 time through to 9/4 time. As Moondog explains in an introductory monologue that demonstrates the queerer beat variants of the 27 tempos he plays in, Compositions like "Romot" and "Shakelein Rymot" are stark but sinuous percussive pieces, the live pulse of New York subway clatter and steam mechanics ("Flag On The Hudson" opens with the sound of leaping river shipping). His vocalising, harmonising with himself in the studio, is plaintive or "All Is Loneliness" or "Why Spend The Dark Night With You". The combination of primitive percussion and timeless folk melodies, often performed as rounds, would not be out of place on any of the plethora of free folk and psych folk releases around today. The three dozen tracks on this compilation are a compelling invitation to wonder further and longer in Moondog's trail.

### MURCOF REMEMBRANZA

THE LEAP LABEL CD/LP

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Fernando Corona was born in Tijuana, Mexico, but this second disc in time to coincide with a move to Barcelona. Recording as Murcof, his follow-up to 2002's *Mirage* takes that album's minimalist laptop fundamentals and polished, further, honing and refining carefully. Murcof's pieces run together like a smile, making versions on a similar theme. Despite this homogeneity, you experience an tandem while listening to these waves unrep. Murcof sustains a brooding, paranoid mood, a character of bright ruminations.

Murcof's sprightly bass drum foundation is eddy House-like, though pared back and remote. His infiltrated basslines work on a near subliminal level. The three-part "Rouze"

introduces the piano, contrasting a flowing chamber instrumentation with electronic jittering. Murcof's skeletal rhythms tend to pad along the somnolent sonorities. "Reflex" features a naggng chime figure, repeated at staccato moments, then the last two tracks increase the laptop beat, hastening the beats into primacy with "Robs" enjoying a jumpy moment and "Canno" surging with an oppressively low baseline, the strings arranged to sound like a melody.

Murcof's primary technique is to keep his electronic input trimmed down to a bare minimum of poch, clicks, drunks, blips, emanations, swells, sprints and bassa emanations, setting down these carefully euthanised elements on a tattered pillow of stroking and swooping string arrangements. His judgement is extremely precise. The balance is perfect.

### NO NECK BLUES BAND

THE COLLECTIVE IMAGININGS  
OF OANTARENUS, COOK & CO  
SOUND @ 1/GREECE NAPPAU CD

BY ERIN COLLY

One day after George W. Bush was elected to office in 2004, The No Neck Blues Band held a kind of assessment/performance in NYC's Greene Naftal Gallery. There was a ritual environment, there was an "elated" to contemplate, and there was music. The event soon became legendary, and the sounds have been documented in high style and released in a very cool gallery edition.

With a mix of raw free rock blabber going on these last few years, it's sometimes hard to remember how important No Neck were to the beginning of this trend, and how essential they have remained as innovators. Their releases can be very obscure, but there isn't one of them that hasn't flattened me — their sound is always evolving.

The Collective Imaginings is a suite broken into eight parts. All instrumental, some of the pieces, like "The Hungry One", are built of ominous tones and snags and clattering percussions. You can almost feel the evil spirit of Bush being torn apart by eagles. Others, like "The Quaker The Police Show Us", will sound like politicos drunk on power only find their bestial selves exorcised by manic guitar parts that wind tighter and tighter until all heads pop like grapes. But it's all very beautiful, abstract, powerful and capable of transporting you pretty far away from reality if you let it.

The packaging is great too — a nice gallery folder with a Christopher Wool print in a facing pocket. And if you think that by playing this magical CD you might be putting another nail into the coffin of GW, well, what's not to like?

### TUJKO NORIKO

#### BLURRED IN MY MIRROR

ROOM446 CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Osaka-based TuJKo Noriko has been compared to Miles and Björk, but *Blurred In My Mirror* makes a mockery of such vague referencing. Lust and glitch-edited, economic and edoclic this album may be, but the process of soundfile exchange that took place between Noriko and producer Lawrence English, credited with the bulk of the music here, has resulted in an album that slips through the nets of modern generic.

Opener "Nagaiga Harbor" sees Noriko sing in English for the first time — well, not so much sing

as nimbly a disturbing take of romantic, psychotic obsession, in what sounds like a heavily drugged monologue. It's as if she's drifting in and out of consciousness beneath dizzying straight and swinging vibes, with titillating injections of rhythmic cutting in like cheezwhiz.

"Ticket For Memory", significantly the only track in which Engels's involvement is peripheral, is the only time when Blurred In My Mirror sounds like a complete, Portmeirion-style trip-out. Thereafter, the fast, gapping unrehearsed air of the opener is sustained — seductive, yet tense. With its kithenge soprano and disturbingly hallucinogenic ambience, "I'm Not Dreaming" is like a transcription of the workings of the subconscious. "Switch Off The Sun" circles around what sound like the nutty remains of ancient Cocteau Twins' R&B, while "Magpies And Morning" is instead (yep, like, not in the monomer and bathetic sense but in that) Neko has transformed into an Army Of Heat, with broken up, multi-tracked vocals floating like so many facsimiles, as something down below guitars Benjamin Thompson's strains desperately on an acoustic guitar as if its hands have been tethered to the instrument. Blurred In My Mirror is the result, happily, of far too much processing.

## NURSE WITH WOUND ECHO POEME: SEQUENCE NO. 2

UNITED JAMAICA CD  
BY PHIL ENGLAND

Ireland's one-man surrealistic hellcrafter Steve Stapleton continues to pull rabbits out of his hat. A one-line sleeve-note reveals that the inspiration for his latest project is Alan Parsons' black and white 1981 film, *L'Amie Derniere A Manerend* (Last Year At Manerend) about a stronger, pushing an after-wait with a married woman in an old hotel. Echo Poeme: Sequence No. 2 is a surreal work in that the only sound sources are the French language voices of Anne-Marie Dehan Steiner and Isabelle Gabon. Their song lines have the quality of something sung softly and secretly to oneself, their spoken lots, whispers and breathy utterances in somewhere between sensuality, intimacy and interior monologue.

Stapleton layers those fragile vocal fragments into a hypnotic web, occasionally partitioning them from one extreme of the stereo field to the other while a gentle background drone hovers almost imperceptibly in the background. His son-linear arrangement — things keep coming around — has the effect of lulling you into a liminal twilight. It is further evidence, following on from last year's *Sheepfoot Radio*, that despite occasional relapses his flair as a producer can also author and his ability to conceptualise outside conventions and trip us into the outer-neary-everywhere, remain largely undimmed.

## OCKS

3 & 4

NARINACK RECORDS  
BY MARC MAGSTERS

Guitarist and singer John Dwyer is best known as the leader of noise-rock juggernaut Coachwhips, but his solo project OCKS (with drummer Patrick McMullan) is actually more prolific. Last year's 2-banded 22 songs in 52 minutes, and 3 & 4 (two separate albums released together) offers 28 more in about an hour. While Coachwhips' music is relentlessly abrasive, the

songs of OCKS are unswervingly distant, always played calmly in a far-off production fog. This restraint makes OCKS abstractly elusive. Even on Dwyer's fattest songs, the needing quality of his music is enticing.

3 & 4 is dominated by Dwyer's subdued voice. Often his vocals are so delicate and airy he sounds like the ghost of a child, and his music has a nursery rhyme feel, infused with the simplicity of sing-song blues. Much of 3, which is subtitled *Songs About Death & Dying* Vol. 3, is eerily innocent, with a clown's knock for melting cuteness and bittersweetness into one hair-raising effect, "Hey Kid" weaves acoustic guitar through bokeh barking sounds, while "Sail The Lake" slips a sneaky melody into a field of radio-like static. The record's highlights, "I'm So Sad", is like an ancient tune plucked from an overgrown graveyard. Dwyer's surer lyrics are consistently intriguing, but 3 starts slightly from a blurry somewhere. Only a few twists cleverly surprises beyond their initial structures.

4 (ironically subtitled *Get Stewie*) is less predictable, with more rhythmic varieties and instrumental curiosities. McMullan's chunky drumming is energized, and Dwyer's adept guitar piping swells accordingly. "Friends Of St. Thomas" and "Along The Way" are small electronic bleats to throw the testifying rhythms off-color, and "Come On My Mind" thrusts forward due to McMullan's stamping pulse. Later, a cover of Donegan's "Get The Beamps" builds kinetic energy through persistent stops and starts. Throughout, Dwyer paints a unique brand of bluesy blues that, after four solid albums, is pretty much his to patent.

## HANS OTTE ORIENT/OCCIDENT/MINIMUM: MAXIMUM POGUS CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Hans Otto, now approaching 80, studied composition with Paul Hindemith and piano with Walter Giesecke. From 1959 until 1984 he was music director at Radio Bremen, promoting awareness of innovative work by the likes of John Cage and David Tudor. In his own writing and performances, he has generally cultivated forms of simplicity associated with receptiveness to spiritual influences. His best known keyboard work, *Das Buch Der Klänge* (The Book Of Sounds) was praised for its player-like qualities by the great Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath. His *Alttagosseus*, commissioned by medical realist Malcolm Goldstein, drew inspiration from Zen. The two works on this new release of old material reveal a further aspect of his composition activity, meaning-making sonic tapestries emerging from an idiosyncratic blend of sound sources.

*Minimum/Maximum* (1973) is billed as a 40 minute environment for two organists, recorded simultaneously in Stockholm and Bremen. The players are Karl-Erik Welin and Gerd Zache. The music mixes voices and breathy exhalations, sputters repeated with variation on metallic percussions, organ and harpsichord and electric whirring that resembles the frenetic twirl of model aeroplane electric. The text is German. The overall effect is dramatic, dissonant and strongly assaulting. *Orient/Occident* (1977) is an 11 minute work performed by oboe and clarinet players across a tape of overlaid and

burbling electronic streams. The combined impact of cool sustained instrumental tones and agitated babble is hypnotic and compelling. I'm reminded of Alvin Curran's "Magnetic garden" compositions, in that Otto's pieces appear to be governed by a logic entirely their own, occupying their own distinctive spaces.

## ANDREW PEKLER STRINGS + FEEDBACK BIRAKOLO CD

BY BURGESS GLASER

Despite the cold, mechanistic nature of the imaginary circuit diagram on the cover, Berlin-based Calmawan Andrew Pekler's contemplative recordings on his third album are steeped in warmth. Pekler manipulates dry eyetop samples — mostly string and piano fragments extracted from Morton Feldman's work in the 1950s — into fragile, otherworldly sound sculptures.

While the cover diagram is suggestive of the structured (if complex) nature of electronic music, *Strings + Feedback* is compelled by its own inner dynamics, floating effortlessly on soundwaves of its own making. Notes seem to slow down, speed up, shiver, rotla, twist and turn of their own accord, as if Pekler's role is to nurture, not create, to guide not rule.

Although each of the ten compositions work individually, they're also clearly part of a whole, a series of mood vignettes with the same underlying connective tissue. The mysterious feathered and starflecked chords of *Spener* ("Fluck") are juxtaposed with the dissonant bee-footing pipes, organs and platans of the eerie "Locutor", but we are nevertheless travelling along the same path.

Similarly, the incooping rhythm of "Betwixt", where machines appear to try to elicit responses from each other, sits comfortably next to the feedback-driven, easily build of dissonant textures of "Doubtless", while the dusty film noir moments of "Cygnes" are still made up of the same DNA as the dulled thuds and hushed piano sonorities of "Ib".

Opening on the hypnotic "Dringst", where brushed strings build them-like into shuddering and swooping layers, the listener is left in mid-air, mesmerized. *Strings + Feedback* conjures a sense of childlike wonder at the beauty of sound itself. The ghost in Pekler's machine is very much alive.

## TOM RECHION SOUNDTRACKS TO A COLOR: GOLD & BLACK NO LANK CO

BY KEN HOLINGS

John Cage once remarked that the albums documenting his presentations of *Venations* IV at a Los Angeles gallery in the early 1960s should really be treated as postcards that had been sent from the event. It's an apt analogy. Recordings made of — or, in this case, for — a particular performance or installation tend, like postcard greetings sent while on holiday, to be simultaneously intimate and distant, exotic yet banal. Like the shell you pick up on the beach that never looks quite so sparkling or attractive when you get it home. *Soundtracks To A Color Gold And Black* was an environment created by sound artist and sometime *Wire* contributor Tom Rechion at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery in 2004. It consisted of 2000 speakers,

## The Wonderful World of Innova Recordings



The Henry Brant  
Collection, Vol. 3



Music of Gerald Busby



Electropolis



Walt Steckler's  
Versiflage



the label of  
the American  
Composers  
Forum

# Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapen formats

Gudrun Gut

The new single by Berlin's **Gudrun Gut**, *Move My/Thomas Fehlmann Tango Shuffle Annex (Einseiger Einzelbox 7")* is one of the best *ex-Mafex!* records I've heard in a good while. The basic prop on the A side has to do with some sort of dub-wheeeze-tango mix through layers of effect and padding. Thomas Fehlmann's remix is good, too, but almost redundant, since the original is so blistered.

Really nice single from Chicago's **Anomaly Untitled** (*SGE 7"*) takes some basic electronic post-punk mechanics and adds a lot of interesting piano, string and horn stuff [real or imagined, I don't know] in a way that recalls early '80s dream music of the first order. The two instrumental works also like traces of form memories, while evoking very pleasant ones. And just wait till you hear the little Monder Decoder take.

No real info on this release by **Bla-Nuse**, but they thoughtfully provided a bag of tea so that you can have something to sip while pondering their origins. And ponder we must. Occasionally in *A Day Don't Fly (No Label 7")* is an interesting and thoroughly eccentric offering by the rootless trio. Tasteful vocals, boldfaced drumming, electronics, guitars and more collide here in extremely interesting ways. Even when their sound is a little slack and dark there's a lot of stilt going on here — reminiscent, in a way, of classic *Runaway-Runaway* Chicago sponginess, and beats edged with concrete. We could all do worse. And don't forget the tea.

**Yellow Swans** have yet another release out today, and again it's pretty much a solo effort, *Alchemico/Blindly On! The Cover (Deathburn Arc 7")* is wild mass of power-croaked vocals, chittering electronics, highly attenuated guitar and the assumption of lives lived beyond the call of beat or taste. Like some of their Midwest brethren, the California unit takes a completely waded approach to post-punk dynamics. They falakon the air around them into something very special, and this is one of their best.

**Jeeme Soudan** is best known for his drumming inside the French/Euro Industrial/avant spectrum (*Ven Magne!, Art Zoy!, etc.*), but he has a long history of solo electronic work using the name *Mimetic*. *Personal Plot* by *Mimetic Tale* (*Thru 3" CD*) comprises three tracks of this. By turns atmospherically bubbling or propulsively催动, the music here is surprisingly engaging and makes an excellent backdrop for shriving over the dullest pair of shoes. Believe me, I know.

By doing a real good job hybridizing CBGB, the X sound, Pretenders and whatever, British's *Mona Taxil* have crafted one of the best recent

pop singles that wasn't by Yo La Tengo. *Kind Of Better/Happy Smile (PMS 7")* slides through genres with the same knowing grace as *YL* at their most crowd pleasing. Should we expect a Stephen Pastel guest spot in the near future?

A duo of database musical prodigies, France's *Les Peissens Antistis* do a rather nice job of meshing around with electronics, concrete and other shifting textual voices. Some of *Soundre (Ingrid Evolution 3" CD)* is dreamy and softly surreal, other parts have a somber chamber feel, but there is almost always the slight sense that anxiety is pressing against the frames of the main image, that something is very somewhere. And that's a nice feeling to have.

**Roselli Su No Pei Raga** is a collaborative project between Italian synth composer *Yent* and Justin Wagan from the great *Deams Of Fall* Buildings. They've just released a color-coded set of three discs — *Camera Obscura*, *Light Aversion* and *Ward White Feathers Fall All Across The Country (Experimental Seaford 3x3" CD)*, all of which are excellent. They combine the quiet sweep of *CDTB*'s epic quietude with guitar-toned soundscapes and other surprisingly meditative noise traps. My favorite may be *Camera Obscura*, due to its heavy use of inside/outside piano explorations, but I'm sure that *Light Aversion*, with its analogue bell tones, will have its proponents as well. Anyway, the whole set looks and sounds as nice as a nude walk into the sand.

Italian polymath *Giacomo Spada*'s latest (perhaps) release is the *nu. C* 010 *Il Rapporto Usceva Editions 3" CD*, which has been mostly described as a minimal electronic piece. Perhaps our copy has been mispackaged somehow, because the single seven minute piece here sounds like nothing but solo piano. It's a lovely, well-spaced set of notes, born abstract and lyrical, in the great tradition of *Sense* and his *Bearded (iC)* (*BC*).

*Low At Audioscopic 04 (Fourier Transform 10")* is a limited edition of 500 blue vinyl 10", featuring a side each by Leeds's *Vibracathedral Orchestra* and the rejuvenated *Telescopos*. One time Creation Records recording artists and *Spacemen 3* disciples, both recorded live at the Audioscopic Festival that took place in Oxford in 2004. The *Vibracathedral* side is one of their wierdest to date, with the usual celestial sunbow tones abandoned in favor of a huzz of inimitable electronics and some jarrish Northern rockin' ruckus from Neil Cempella. The *Telescopos* side is even more oblique, with the kind of subtle guitar interrogations that fuelled Dean Roberts-led projects like *Theta* and *White Wriggled Mouth* extended into new zones of drone.



It's a good pairing, making the package is a keeper (OK).

Far from stereotypical representations of the group as one-dimensional pragmatists, *Stereolab* have always been aesthetically voracious, translating avant-garde working practices drawn from music's forgotten histories into new pop archetypes. The group's thumbprint is immediately recognizable even as they shift into new territory, as on *Rybermetroid Sabotage Pt 1/ Pt 2 (Tone Purr 7")*, where they stretch looped choruses of Larissa Sadler's aerated vocals over cut-and-spliced bits of electronics and a giddy methomine stamp. Imagine the T Rex rhythm section booking the *United States Of America*.

*Plastic Milk/Ma Sucky Rainphase (Tone Purr 7")* is the least arresting of these three new singles, with the group an anamorph through two sides of *Stereolab*'s pop formality. While they are lovely songs, they lack the inspired sideways moves — Komeda's soundtrack blurs, dual-mono recording processes — taken on recent albums *Sound Out* and *Mergence Eclipse*. For the A side of *Interlock/Incurvaceous Road Maps (Tone Purr 7")* *Stereolab* set forth on a motorik-Motown groove before effortlessly slipping into an expansion upon the proto-disco theme they first explored on *Instant 0* in the *Universes*' *Mass Rift*, the flipside splits its personality near its end and sheathes into an elegant, brassy waltz. These singles are all identifiably *Stereolab*, but one of the signs of a truly great group is the ability to riff endlessly on an ever changing scene.

**3 Forks** are a new trio featuring noted New Zealand noise dons *Donald McPherson*, *Sandor Lab* Technicians *conservator Tim Corlett* and *United Fairy Moons* label head and ex-Casperick member *James Carrin*. Their second title *Firewood (Metronomic 3" CD-R)* is a great set of mostly acoustic sound miniatures. Where many of their free playing compatriots go for electrification and rock density, or the mapping of abrasive drone movements, 3 Forks rely on released, elision, hesitant interplay between scraped and plucked strings and playful, toy-like wind instruments. Occasionally they work up a head of steam, such as the noisy clouds of keyboards that skid within "Belated," but for the most part the sound is natural and quite lovely, a series of simplistically effective etchings on chilled walls.

Burnie dips into the English underground and open enough you will encounter Phil Todd, either due to a prodigous history of more than 15 groups and aliases, his first label and mail order outlet *Bertie Welcomes Careful Drivers*, or his main project *Ashtray Navigations*. Or his

fondness for Kudhar Brothers Tims. His recent self-released disc *Aurora Grease Sweetroast (Members Of An Aesthetic 3" CD-R)* is bewilderingly good. Todd's aesthetic tends toward disorienting juxtaposition and the leisurely development of sheer sonic overload. You can hear this on "Can Dialectics Break Bricks?", where the chime of toy bells is swarmed by waves of glib, buzzing guitars. The cumulative intensity of the high level hum and metallic screeble that chums through "Two Chimes For Tuesday" may well be for the near apoplectic heavy rock pound of "A Four Foot Banana". More broken equipment rumbling from the bay that *Stonehenge* isn't could keep.

The folks behind the *Background Frequencies* series of lathe-cut singles have signed off on their project with a split release from *Castings* and II entitled *Jones Broken, Eyes To The Sky (Steadycarb 7")*. *Castings*, a multi-limbed outfit that hover between Sydney and Newcastle, Australia, spew a mucky blit of subliminal drollery on their contribution "No Puppets, No Gees". There is something refreshingly non-pro about their approach to such bourgeois nations as programming the drum machine.

They squeeze a lurching gait from the instrument, which they subsequently effuse with red eyed squirts of analogue synthesis. Low level hum from an unknown, unidentifiable source gids the composition. Flip the record for *II's* "Beefs" and things get paltis, with the Melbourne two-pieces hanging minuette melodies for brittle guitar over clicking, impotent drums. It sounds too post-rock at first blush, but the subtle chime of its music transounds that tired, fossilized genre, particularly when "Beefs" unwinds to a quiescent pend of reflective drums, with the odd bleep sounding out as uncentered navigation.

Back to Sydney, where we would have found the noisome *Antony Guerra*, had he not just relocated to Tokyo for an indefinite stretch. His newest solo title *Kingtoms V (Black Petal 3" CD-R)* had its genesis in suburban Ashfield, however, so imagine *Guerra* can still stink *Guerra* as its own. *Guerra's* music moves all over the shop but largely as he has been working on his most personal formations to date, embracing melodic nimbly figures for ten fingers. The four unfurled pieces on *Kingtoms* drag bows a cross slack guitar strings as *Guerra* ciphers the most glorious loops, assembling incisives of tiny notes like piles of needles and pins, over which he sounds weightless vocal sighs, like a tired, exhausted Richard Youngs. (AD) □ Reviewed by *Byron Coley, Jon Dale and David Reuben*

half that number being gold and the other half black, that covering two rooms. A similar number of CDs containing separate soundtracks for each room were given away along with the posters. The idea of so many individual mass-produced elements coming together to constitute some greater abstract piece on the associative power of these two colours nearly reverses the postcard analogy in a very real sense, sounding off the card is the event. Reichen's skill with loops, found sounds and manipulation of repeated sounds is already well known, and he's clearly adept enough to establish a distinctive timbre for each of the two colours. The main sequence as the gold track spars and glitters, out with through random rattlings, percussive splashes and bright any notes. The black track swells over a pronounced downbeat, a string bass scratches away while briefly identifiable woodwinds pop and wheee. Make of it what you will, *Soundtracks To A Color* — in a remarkable act of artistic generosity — is as much your show as it is Reichen's.

### STEVE REICH YOU ARE (VARIATIONS)

MONOCHORD CD  
BY LOUISE GOW

One characteristic of all Steve Reich's output — whether you choose the pared-downness of an early tape and clapping work like *It's Gonna Rain* or the ambitious music theatre represented by a performance like the *Cave* — is that phrases are meaningful. Phrases — layers of rhythm, of melodic change, of vocal text — have always provided the foundation stone of his work. It's possibly a reason why repetition is so important, because, once established, each phrase becomes something else. It's reinforced by repetition. It's repeated by counterpart; its relationships are rotated through harmonic cycles.

So it's no surprise that with his four-movement *You Are* (Variations), Reich is sticking to what works best. Premiered in 2004 (and here recorded for the first time by the Los Angeles Master Chorale under Grant Gerber), each variation has its own start, test, their authors — two nubis, Wittgenstein and God — all possessed of a certain authority. The surprise, though, is how much variation Reich allows himself here — there's a real pleasure to be had in experiencing the aplomb of the music. So in the first variation, the one that takes as its text an 18th century Hasidic aphorism, "You are whatever your thoughts are," he incorporates quotes from a 19th century monophonic song entitled "Hermann Arns". Elsewhere there are, the composer suggests, hints of James Brown. As ever, the structural experience of *You Are* is overwhelming. At times, its canonical lines link up as if they were emphatic statements of logical argument. However, the sensory encounter with the music is just as strong, as a dominating percussion — four pianos, marimbas, vibraphones — quivers under the rhythmical attack. In a way that recalls early work, Reich has his six violins shimmer with a typical close tempo and harmony arrangement that makes much out of the brevity of their basic material.

From 2003, *Cello Counterpoint*, the 11 and a half minute work for eight cellos (or one cello and seven pre-recorded ones) is here played for the musician it was written for, Maya Beiser. As Reich says, the most complex of his

counterpart work, and his first for the single instrument, the piece certainly travels great distances — the repetitive motifs are there, but so too is an interest in a soundworld that abuts the atonal — and it's testimony to Beiser's ability that the listener doesn't get run down by its cross-rhythms.

### STEVE RODEN ODER DELIAS OR BUTTERFLIES

NOVA CD  
BY DAAN WARBURTON

On B April, Steve Roden doesn't feel he was in a restaurant where he ordered a dish called Deter Dekes, which he vaguely recalls as consisting of "frogs floating in broth". When invited to inaugurate Herbie Hancock's new Visual Objects imprint, which aesthetic and typology owe much to Bernhard Glimmer's terms *creasur*, on which label Fred Frith and Garter recently collaborated on *Alatrasa*, Roden selected the name of his imaginary culinary speciality as a title. Fried recognisable "order" as Gomorrah, but mistakenly assumed "deter" had something to do with butterflies. Hence the title.

If the slowwounds (and this level) dwell on the anecdotes, it's simply because there's so little to say about the music other than providing a bald description of the 40-minute piece, which progresses from diminished to minor to major tonalities and back again in a series of dovetailing sections approximately five minutes long. Roden's sound material is as timely as recognisable — in addition to his beloved gongs and shimes, a bamboo flute made for him by Glimmer adds a vaguely animal colour to the proceedings — but often inescapable. Strange yet fascinating montages of tinkling percussion float above thin, onrushing loops of distant vaguely modal/guitar chord sequences, flittered and they flutter into dust like the skeletons of dead leaves.

But none of this explains why this elusive yet far from inaccessable music is so strongly moving. Like Glimmer's work, it remains coolly objective, giving no apparent indication of any personal emotional significance for the composer, while provoking in the listener an intimate and deeply felt response.

### OLAF RUPP/TONY BUCK/ JOE WILLIAMSON

WEIRD WEAPONS

EMANEM CD  
BY BRIAN MORTON

This is an international trio, brought together in Berlin three years ago, largely by chance but also clearly by strong creative empathy. Probably the only familiar name here is that of percussionist Tony Buck, who's also one third of Australian longform minimalist The Nocks. He's in robust company on *Weird Weapons* as well, anchoring guitarist Olaf Rupp, a 42-year old German who has worked with Butch Morris and Lel Coenin, among others, and Canadian bassist Joe Williamson, whose session credits are even more impressive.

Together, they make a quiet, subtly shifting free music that draws heavily on Rupp's highly individual technique and Buck's ability to invent free metre with a sense of overwhelming order. Williamson is in some respects the least obvious, but also arguably the most creative, finding stable points in the gravitational tug

between his two partners to execute some beautiful playing.

Though no one will need much in the way of metaphor to get a purchase, Buck's analogy with politicians, 3D imagery and digital pixels are entirely apposite to this music, but to keep reversing the analogy and eventually comes up with "the who seen as a large quiet organism made up of millions of stimulus cells at working together". That's as close as anyone is going to get. Some of these sounds seem involuntary and gamic rather than performed. They have an organic air in diversity that draws powerful logic from just a few semi-solid figures and shapes.

*Weird Weapons* contains just two long tracks, coming in at 34 and 24 minutes. The titles, "Naughtybird" and "Spaniard", suggest yet more imagery: modern, flexible fabrics that reveal the stain of general obscenity and the rip of analysis. If Emanem remains associated in some minds with archiving British Improv, this should be enough to confirm that Martin Davidson continues to look for fresh sounds and faithfully delivers them.

### GEORGE RUSSELL/LIVING TIME ORCHESTRA

THE 80TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT

CONCEPT PUBLISHING 3CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

Though no one made much of it, the 2003 tour marked another important anniversary as well, the half-century of George Russell's highly influential *The Lydian Chromatic Concept Of Total Organization*. Unlike the hocus-pocus of hermeneutics, these are ideas that you can study and apply and they're as deep, possibly too deep for visibility, into contemporary musical culture, surfacing everywhere from Miles Davis's "How Bizarre" to Michael Jackson's "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'". So why isn't Russell better known and why wasn't this birthday tour more of an event, the way Gil Evans' 70th was?

The question's not quite answered by these four magnificent compositions and arrangements. There's nothing outwardly不忘 about Russell's *Orchestra*. It's just that, obsessed as we are with small groups, we've lost the ability to hear the stasis of detail, the counterpointing movements of scales and harmonic equations in big band music, a bit like you lose your sense of direction and awareness of topography if you never climb out of the car.

Russell makes a step by starting with an excerpt from *Lies To Believe*, a mini-concerto for trumpet Pauls Mikelborg. His hermeneutic understanding — or, rather, his Lydian Chromatic understanding — is acute and even this short lyrical introduction he demonstrates the deep structure of a deceptively straightforward piece.

The orchestra, literally sprinkled with Brits, proceeds with *Electronic Sonata For Solo Leader*. By Nature, the 1969 suite that helped to launch Jon Gorkin as a superstar. Here, it's Andy Sheppard who catches the spotlight, two excellent fortissimo bracketing firework from Hoss Hoshizuka and bassonist/bass clarinetist Pete Huh. Mikelborg comes in again towards the end, less intent on a role originally taken on record by Marred School.

One side is dominated by Russell's evolutionary epic *The African Game*. It's a less apocalyptic work than, say, Charles Mingus's *Pithecanthropus*

*Ecclipsa*. No accident that Russell invokes nature so often. His interest lies in ongoing process rather than packaged eschatology or genre. Read *The Lydian Concept* alongside O'Nery Thompson's *On Growth And Form* and the parallels are unavoidable.

Sheppard again solos prominently, with another fire spot from Mikelborg on "Consciousness", a living cogitation from China Bissou on "Caribbean Man" and a suitably songlike/questioning coda from keyboardist Steve Ladd on "The Future?" — make of that question mark what you will.

Rounding out the set are a strong, though slightly tattered version of "It's About Time" and then Russell's own clapping arrangement of Miles Davis's "So What", with Mike Walker joining the two male soloists for a well-deserved baw. A shaming amount of modern jazz history is worked through on this album. With Russell's catalogue in depressing disarray — I reckon only six or seven other things are currently available — it's an ideal place to start.

### PHILIP SAMARTZIS/GÜNTER MÜLLER/VOICE CRACK

WIRELESS WITHIN

FORKARS CD

BY KATHY MOLINE

Documenting a 2002 summit meeting of Australian sound artist Philip Samartzis and three elder statesmen of Silesian electronic Improv Günter Müller, Andy Goh and Norbert Möslang (the latter two fulfilling one of their last engagements as *Voice Crack* before disbanding, Wireless Within comprises an hour of noise-sleep interplay and high sonic drama.

The album's three long tracks are notable for their tightly controlled build up of pressure, with each new intervention (be it a snitch of field recording from Samartzis, a spate of bowed cymbal feedbacks from Müller or a loud pop or pur from Goh and Möslang's "cracked everyday electronics") adding up the music's tension. The final piece "Tombak, Rothless" possesses a good deal more bite than its title suggests, despite opening on a deceptively bucolic atmosphere of early morning birdsong. The pastoral ambience is progressively disrupted by shuddering machine groans and what sounds like a swarm of robot wasps round an arenal carcass. "Bechus Marsh" pits a backdrop of laptop fizz against abrasive but abstracted smears of texture and fields of static that almost resolve themselves into a rhythm, before the track comes to an abruptly slamming halt with a screech of electronic effects. The final piece "Sleep Block" is more measured, with a crystalline feedback drone oscillating calmly as the Samartzis drags in samples of French speaking kids at play. There's a delightful moment when, as the electronics sparkle like raindrops in the sun, a little voice pipes up "Maman, il pleut?" But, true to form, the atmosphere does return and the sound of slow ominous footfalls trudging through primordial sludge brings the album to a close.

Though by no means an easy listen, *Wireless Within* has a wacky cinematic sound that could easily open with a main menu screen. It's like a soundtrack to some spookily mysterious involving various unspeakable, unidentifiable acts, leaving one with the distinct feeling that sometimes it's best not to ask too many questions.

# The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Radio on: James Eek Roppe



**Essays On Redis: Can I Hear Two Minutes Of Your Time?** (Okeh 013) is curated by Perla based media artist Miquel Carreras. Each of the 39 tracks, from contributions such as Herbie Hancock, Rita, Henrik Björnsson and Carreras himself, clock in at the two minute mark, primarily so as to let as many artists as possible. It seems, rather than aesthetic concerns, these brief 'essays' are spun from the thesis that radio, as the longest surviving electronic medium, is in danger of being taken for granted, un-marvelled at. Yet not only was radio mostly like the first place where people were first exposed to white noise, it is an ideal instrument of the avant garde (as John Cage, on Imaginary Landscape #4 and Stockhausen on *Hymnen* among others, recognized) — the very nubility of the air is an indicator of both chance and simultaneity. Moreover, its every emanation amounts to a 'heat-ted' in both literal and, according to Maurice Blanchot, metaphysical species. Radio's output is something which should be nestled and engaged with.

*Open Your Eyes* by Longica focuses as a signature tune for this idea, its banks of sound luring like Hubble clouds and taking on a life of their own. Others like Jamie Eck Roppe apply the notion precisely. He manipulates vinyl recordings of old radio broadcasts in combination with turntables used as radio receivers to capture random broadcasts and frequencies. Elsewhere, contributors range from the musical to the musical, the skin-tiring to the dispensable, but there are many highlights. Lawrence English spins a line of crackle through what sounds like a dismal parlour room enlivened only by the chimes of a grandfather clock — radio as resuscitator of dead, bourgeois art; you might summon Stetson Kennedy's waves an electronic, silvery aching of pure, severe noise, while Wilkinson's "Eats His Heart" features muffled fragments of momentous radio announcements floating across the ether, occasionally belted inside out by intermittent spatial glitches. Overall, that is, electronics that benefits from having a contextual purpose. (DS)

There's a painting by the surreal artist René Magritte, "The Meteored Assassin" (1926), which depicts a woman's corpse on a divan and several plaudettes palerons waiting to apprehend the murderer, who is calmly listening to an old hand-cranked Victrola complete with horn as speaker. Obviously, even in a narrative situation such as this, time stands still for the sure song of the 78 rpm disc. It's easy to imagine that the assassin has been mesmerized by the chilling intensity of Geisha Wiley's

"Skinny Leg Blues", the moaning semi-somnising of Moses Mason's "Red Cross The Disciple of Christ Today" or the metaphysical poetry of Mattie May Thomas's "Worhouse Blues" — all of which have been resurrected from the dusty crannies of history for *American Primitive Vol II: The War Revenants* (1997-2003) (Reverent 020). This stunning collection was curated by John Fahey as part archaeological survey part seance. The profundity and subtlety of these 50 rare performances transcend time and place with a surreal, dreamlike intensity, so much so that the unavoidable sordid surface noise that fogs some of these ancient 'tapes' is actually comforting, a buffer of safety between us and them.

Alternately offering moments of pure naivete (Geisha Wiley sings, lethally but almost casually, "I'm gonna cut your throat baby, I'll look down in your face/Gonna let that lonesome graveyard be your rising place") and sheer ecstasy (among others, the ghostly kaledo and rambunctious voices on Walter Taylor's "Deaf Rag"), these all-but-unknown folk artists provide a simultaneously frightening and joyous perspective on the vagaries of the human heart. Other examples range from songs as worldly as a sad pop commercial (the Naghme's "I Got Your Ice Cold Naghme") to those as otherworldly as The Saty Dog's "Fool's "The Jack", which sounds like a transmission from another planet. We encounter the lawlessly fluid guitar fingerpicking of Bayless Rose, the theorem-like intricacies of Remmy Settlers, the heroic operatic tenor of Horne Quincy Smith, and such unique, unpredictable artists as Elizabeth Johnson, Pegman Terry and Alfred Lewis. In every vocal twang and grapple clarinet moan, drifter-harmonica burp and eerie sputum hammer, there's a taste of the eccentric and the essential, a sound that makes time stand still. (AL)

It would be hard to exaggerate the impact of travelling medicine shows on American roots music. They put black and white — or very often black and blonde — performers — on the same platform, and by definition they were highly mobile, influencing a huge demographic. The great Jimmie Rodgers, helmed as the father of Country & Western or hillbilly music, started his career on the western circuit, often performing with black 'singers' Frank Stokes from Memphis, from whom he got much of his song collection. Rodgers is possibly a little grand to focus on *Good For What All This Music of the Medicine Shows, 1926-1937* (Old Hat 29CD), but his influence is evident. "He's In The Jailhouse Now" was a hit for Rodgers in 1928 and it's covered here by The Memphis Sheiks

(better known as Will Shade's Memphis Jug Band), who turn it into a satire on electoral fraud and political huckstering.

The medicine shows were usually about huckstering of a more direct sort. Muscals acts were there to sober up an audience for the sales pitch that would follow. Though some lewd songs are included on *Good For What All This Music*, most of them concentrate on the sober side of life, presumably so that the quack or mountebank who followed could come on like a second line and promise relief with Doc McCall's tonic Blood Purifier or Wm H Green's Indian Vegetable Pills.

The best known of the acts just about make it over the threshold of cultural viability. Daddy Stovinque lived long enough — until 1987, that is — to be recognized as a musical pioneer. Mack Woolbright, heard here with singer/guitarist Charlie Parker on "The Man Who Would Have Known Never Was A Married Man", earned a huge influence on Earl Scruggs. Sem Jones (aka Stovinque No. 1) was famous as an early version of Roland Kirk, playing bizarre sonorities from Prince Albert Hunt was famous for being shot dead on his 30th birthday by the estranged husband of his girlfriend. And Pink Anderson's contribution to popular music, when posthumously hooked up with Floyd Council, need not repeat... Faxon in assonant skitter, jolters, jug stummers, fruit jar drawers, sambors, couchers, tar hills and toilette bags, and you have a bawdy history of vernacular music, therapeutic culture and politics second to none. Recommended; or rather, prescribed. (BLR)

**35 Mutant Seconds** (Okeh 030/Board/Baskars 03) is the second in an ongoing series of remix projects, in which a single track is remixed by many different hands. The rule the remixers must follow is that no additional material may be introduced. The sole source at their disposal is Rafael Tonik's "Creamy Band", from 2001's, his 1995 release on Antzby/Musso Alternative. The orchestrated feedback of Tonik's 35 second composition, which here ticks off the proceedings, is then stretched and mashed into 11 new configurations. Richard Charler slows the motorik down, reduces its volume and dynamics, and situates it at an anticipatory point somewhere between the latency and infinity. Most music jarrus out of the speakers and loudly proclaims, as versus, but Charler's piece seems to hint at the proceedings rather than denuding them outright, and the listener is gradually imbued into his soundworld. John Kummerberg's "Dunstons", one of the highlights

of 35 *Mutant Seconds* — along with Entz's "Sunrise Charney Sir", Staplewise's "Niet Dream", Ian Eggs' "Longfellow", Sewko's "R&B" and Blake Strickland's "Inconceivable Differences (Inconceivable Freedom)" — reshapes the source material to such a degree that it is obscured or lost. On their tracks, Kim Cascone and Pita retain some of the energy and edginess of Tonik's piece, whereas Alito calms the material and reduces it to a series of pulsations and doses. Remia albums nowadays are so commonplace, and the results often so patchy, that the mere thought of them induces a yawn, but nothing disappoints on 35 *Mutant Seconds* and the programming of the tracks is unusually deft. (SM)

"It's not opening up a packet of chewing gum" remarked Ross Harris, enveloped out masternight behind *Dimension Mix* (Gene Neenie 02), of the problems encountered in collecting together these recorded tributes to Dimension 5 Records, the label set up by educator Esther Nelson and electronic music pioneer Bruce Haack in the 1960s to help teach on how to dance and sing. His frustrations were caught on film by Philip Arangio's in his 2004 documentary on the life and work of Bruce Haack. At the time, Harris was attempting to supply artists with digitally remastered tracks from the various Dimension 5 albums while negotiating with the songs' original publishers, who were no longer speaking to each other from their trailer park home in California. He efforts, however, have been grandly rewarded. Beck brings a loping, singalong dance to "Funky Li Song", while Stabek's monstrous, fusing space rock version of "Media" is worth the purchase price alone. Immortal Justice compresses the whole Dimension 5 story into a few glorious minutes on *Fantastic Plastic Machines* "I'm Bruce", while Tupa's zinging name of "Popcorn" is all source and no calories. Elsewhere, Eels manage to bring a strange dignity to the massively silly "Jelly Dances", Money Mark makes a playful fist of the creepy zoological "Spiders", Arabian Lights succeed in making "Walking Eagle" sound even more bowhitching than the original, and if you thought it was impossible to bring a world weary sway to a song called "Army Ants Lie Your Pants", then you obviously haven't heard Integrax take on it. With part of the proceeds from the sale of this album going to Cure Autism Now and other autism related charities, there's just no end to the joy to be found here. (RH) □ *Reviews by* *Lee Hollings, Art Lange, Brian Marley and Brian Morton and David Stubbs*



# The Boomerang

## New reissues: rated on the rebound

Daydream believers: *Stone Youth*

While Daydream Believe may be *Stone Youth's* defining work, the arrival of *Geo* (DGC 2-CD) two years later in 1990 will smacked of the epochal. Their shift to a major label on an innovative contract coding total creative control to the group removed the taint of such a move for other independently minded outfit, with total effect. The music itself has always had a certain ambiguity, which this release reveals documents in detail.

If the group flirt with the pop mainstream, they do so with a Warholian sense of Pop, as witnessed by their explorations of celebrity psychokinesis in "Linc (Song For Karen)" and "Mildred Pierce" (about Karen Carpenter and Joan Crawford respectively). The brash and throwaway "My Friend Goo" and "Many Christ" are also Warholian sense how Arguably Goo is confused, with Ron St Germain (impossible for the Wildflowers series of hot jazz LPs – but also Foreigner) chosen to mix the album, the sound has a strange sheen, dallying the irremediable sense of Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore's guitars.

The remastered, two-disc edition helps, though a remix would have been the logical solution. As it is, you effectively get that with the inclusion of all the album demos recorded to eight-track with Wharton Tiers. Frequently bootlegged and preferred by some of the group to the final cut, these form the bulk of the bonus tracks. They have a lovely rawness. Only "Blow Job" – the derro take of "Mildred Pierce" – demands a real surprise though, extended through an extra six minutes of free-falling noise.

Compilation tracks and B-sides are collected, but sadly only three previously unreleased pieces suffice here. They're all good: a classic Lee Ranaldo vocal, a short sketch called "Isaac", (which by Dylan Cooley explains in his extensive essay was named for the obvious Shat influence), and "Tilt Bay", featuring a walter of grungy guitar here.

**Matthew Schatz's** *Alteenie* (NWCD 2) is a vintage slice of militantly bleak classic NW (short for New Deutsche Weisse or German New Wave) from 1983. On the devastating "Für Mäuse Auf Der Welt" and "Gesichtchen Der Nacht", it's strongly reminiscent of the dinged synth and real drum sound of DFA's One Kleiner Döner Bissen; elsewhere it evokes a No Wave ambience. Alteenie excels in its buzzing truly unhammed atmospheres, evinced in the piano and vocal play-catches of "Language Tower" (barely the strongest contest for these words so far!) and in the lugubrially contemplative "Haben Gar!", "An' Rau Robet" and "Haukiki".

Recorded originally for the cult *Keekermann*

label, the true counterpart of the original Rough Trade imprint and home for Schatz's group Geisterfahrer, this release of *Alteenie* is augmented by impossible to find tracks from Schatz's *Ritual* EP and the equally execrable sounding NWY anthem "Im Namen Des Volkes" T. Possibly an acquired taste, the musical equivalent of Grappa, this is nevertheless a truly fascinating document of a scene that is being festively rediscovered. (40)

In 1982, **Palais Schauburg** released *Wir Bauen Eine Neue Stadt* ("A City"). With its muted, clipped beats, manifesto for imaginary urban transformation and glowing with cold, funky invent, it proved moderately popular and in keeping with the understandem of the times. However, on their first and faraway best album from which it was taken, 1981's *Palais Schauburg* (Bgvex 2-CD), the music is more dynamic and we have of the haromodical labyrinth in action, while the subversive sentimentality of "Kathleen Gay" is the type of definitive statement that Röde Band rarely dispensed.

**Das Cherry**'s 1986 *Symphony For Improvisers* (Blu Note RVD 2-CD) was its second recording for Blue Note, sitting stylistically somewhere between Ornette Coleman's Free Jazz and Chico Madsen's Liberation Music Orchestra. Pharoah Sanders is pitted against Aggroensis master of the guff trumpet saxophone, Gato Barbieri, while Henry Grimes is joined by Frenchman Jean-François Jenny-Clark on bass, Kari Bergin (vibes/piano) and drummer Ed Blackwell complete the power ensemble.

Cherry calls the album "symphony" because the music is collected into two 20 minute suites, one per side of the original album. The music, too, has woves into its fabric a sense of metric unity, as Cherry's Spanish tinged compositions' tonal bridges the long solo passages. Pharoah Sanders's penning pencils hovering above intertwined lines from Cherry and Basson at the outset presents as dramatic an opening gambit as Blue Note ever released, and Ed Blackwell's long drum solo pushes the structure into bendy shapes that roosted back. Each symphony sees its slow movement, and the second suite opens with Cherry's plaintive canto. Tenseens then build and the album burns itself out with an incendiary final ensemble passage. A vibrant album, packed with colour, imagination and invention. (PC)

The March rightitude that instated psychedelic krautrockers *Ammon Dillj* also gave us *Between*, an alliance of disparate musicians that once included Rastafarian Jones Galway in its ranks. And *The Waves* opened vinyl in 1973, features the core line-up of Peter Michael Hamel on keyboards, about Robert Etou, percussionist Czech Black and guitarist Roberto C Deltre. Between was a crossover



project, very much of its time and committed to spiritual quest in advance of the New Age. Etou's background was the counterculture and modern competitor; Etou's predilections were medieval. Black came from rock and jazz and had accompanied Bob Dylan; Deltre had Latin roots. Guest musicians here add a spacey electronics and oriental banjo-like flute. *Between*, chattering and echoes of *Alone* bind the various strands into a smooth flow, a rather smoky fusion with no adventurous gallantry to add much needed grit. More! Paul Winter Consort than Third Ear Band. Three previously unreleased tracks from 1976 have been added to the release. (MC)

Cast your eye down the personnel listing for Terry Riley's 1968 *Buffalo*, New York recording of *C* and you'll find **Jan Hassell** playing trumpet. He's there too in the credits for *Dream House* (1973) by La Monte Young's Theatre Of Eternal Music. Then, in 1980, collaboration with Brian Eno on their so-called *Fourth World* project revealed Hassell's profile, precipitating appearances on record with *Talking Heads* and David Sylvian.

The characteristic sound of Hassell's breathy, sinuous instant trumpet ready to be fed, a personalised talker he carried into calculatedly exotic musical settings. *City: Works Of Fiction* (Hemis 2-CD) was recorded in 1989 in the wake of *Flash Of The Spirit*, his spellbinding encounter with Bunkin Faso bassist ensemble Farafina. He's joined on City by guitarist Gregg Arakiun, Jeff Rona on keyboards, percussionist Adam Rudolph and bassist Daniel Schwartz. The group play fast and edgy polymathic funk. Hassell's sound has hardened and the production values are unyieldingly late 80s. Compared with the pastoral cool of Hassell's 1977 recording *Verbal Espana* (Lowly Music CD), City speaks of the progressive seriousness of a musical identity. (XG)

**Jeff Magniun's** aversion to the mainstream, combined with a pure diehardism deal and very rare live performances, meant that **Neutral Milk Hotel's** remarkable second album, *In An Aweome Over The Sea* (Domino CD), never received the international attention it deserved. Originally released on Merge in 1996, why this rare as hen's teeth record hasn't been resuscitated before now is baffling. Then, finally, Domino has stepped in to shake the dust off of Magniun's odd and beautiful masterpiece. His self described "folk folk" will no doubt continue to stand the test of time, as *In An Aweome Over The Sea* is one of those rare, robust recordings that sounds just as innovative and magical as it did a decade ago. (MC) □

Reviews by Philip Clark, Mia Clarke, Julian Conroy, Sam Davies, Matthew Ingram and David Stubbs

and lacking in definition. Nor is it ever cold and technical. The delicately treated percussion sounds and loopy saxes that form the backdrop to '85-Permit', which Takemitsu describes misleadingly as dub, are as touching and elegant as the text.

**TORU TAKEMITSU**  
A FLOCK DESCENDS INTO  
PENTAGONAL GARDEN  
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CD  
QUOTATION OF DREAM  
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CD  
BY PHILIP CLARK

Toru Takemitsu's fusion of orientalism, Debussian harmonies and an awareness of Garmisch modernism made an intriguing bridge at one stage, although I wonder how well the music he wrote in the late decade of his life has lasted. *Quotation Of Dream* (1991) is a stream of consciousness about musical seascapes hooked around quotations from, among other things, Debussy's *La Mer*. But the quoted material is tenual and rare, nor does this interpolated cross-referencing and registers as a simplistically achieved comfort zone for the ears. Other works on the disc give further evidence that Takemitsu's art descended into mannerism and desolation towards the end. *Garden Rain*, a survey of his career early works, is more satisfying. The disc containing his powerfully expressive string piece *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden* (1977) is probably the best of this batch. A Flock is widely considered as Takemitsu's breakthrough piece, and its duelling with the earlier *Quotation* for four solo instruments and orchestra suggests that the 1970s was Takemitsu's golden period.

**31KNOTS**  
TALK LIKE BLOOD  
POLYVINYLS, CD  
BY SAM DAVIES

31Knots are from Portland, Oregon, and have a few albums already behind them on the obliquely named label 51°40' Or Right? from Michigan. Jay Petrelli (Deathcab, Exene Cervenka) engineers, and also fills in on drums to cover for a recent departure, underpinning the guitar and vocals of Joe Haeg and the bass of Jay Wrennberger. The group's sound shares some elements with Deathcab: abrupt eruptions, some time signature tricks and a touch of the baroque in the arrangements. But these are all hallmarks of the math-rock mini-genre, which followed from the work of groups like Fugazi and Slint, and they make for a true companion. It's not only the angular guitar stylings and wavy rhythm sections that recall these groups, but also Haeg's vocal, sounding as they do rather like Guy Picciotto's for Fugazi. Unfortunately this companion shows up Haeg's lyrics to less flattering effect, studded as they are with chunky phrases like 'A bloodless, pensive muscle of warmth'. And yes, it doesn't sound any better when sung.

But 31Knots do avoid the classic math-rock pitfall of seductively indulging their musicianship. There's a distinct emphasis on songwriting, more so than their previous press, with references to the extended chord progressions of Yes and King Crimson, might suggest. Some of the fiduciary moments are the most enjoyable, the lead line to 'A Void Plays A Kiss' for example. There's also an effort to widen the

soundfield through elements of sequencing and sampling, with mixed results. A cello leap on 'Imprudent Despising' sounds ragged on rather than integral.

**TIMET/MARIPOSA**  
METAMORFOSI DI CANZONI  
NAPOLETANE  
I DISCHI FORMA CD

**VAPORI DEL CUORE/ALFRED  
ZIMMERLIN/GÜNTER MÜLLER**  
ALPINE SONGS/REFRAINS +  
POINT ZERO  
ATRAC/ART CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Charles Ives, on the cusp of the 20th century, called this kind of procedure "an old song, deranged". But I doubt whether the clockwork repetitions and percussive bursts of 'Cammello', on *Metamorfosi Di Canzoni Napoletane*, were quite what he had in mind. Aspects of Neapolitan traditional songs are discernible in these recordings and are treated with a degree of reverence (and the affective respect that reverence often inspires), but at times the melodies get mired in entropy and another, even more interesting trainee comes to the fore.

Mariposa are an ensemble consisting of electric guitars, keyboards, winds, reeds, vocals, violin and percussion, though each of the musicians plays at least one other instrument including harmonium, min-reqs and glassophone. The instrumentation suggests that this is rock music of a particularly adventurous bent, and the rewvolts of the music by Lorenzo Brusio at Treno Studio, Lucca, using only Mariposa's material and no additional samples, makes the music even less gene-bound than it already was. Brusio's looping and collage are evidently just the first stage in an ongoing metamorphosis; latencies are implied to sample the source material from the database section of his website ([wwwmariposa.org](http://wwwmariposa.org)) and review it in turn.

Vapor Del Cuore was formed in 1993 by musicians who had hitherto been involved in experimental rock and contemporary classical music. The result they give themselves was a simple one: work without boundaries. In recent years they've become increasingly involved in improvisation, and joint projects have ensued with Nicolas Collins, John Zorn, Elliott Sharp and Ohm Yoshihiko. 2000's Alpine Songs, which comprises the first half of this CD, involves a mixed quartet (flute, clarinet, violin and prepared piano), with doublings and sometimes triplings on electronics. CD players, voice, electric guitar, objects, etc., a sound engineer and special guest Alfred Zimmerlin on cello.

Bookended by two snatches of song ('E Alle Sente' and 'Efecta Misch'), the second play for laughs, 'Alpenlieder', and their refrain form a suite of tidy wren, often rather knotty improvisations. Despite its great status, Zimmerlin is fully integrated into the ensemble.

On Point ZERO, from 2001, Günter Müller replaces Zimmerlin, and the ensemble are bolstered by two additional members playing piano and synthesiser. After the so-easy-sounding opening measures, Müller contributes a powerful 'Cedroni', built in loops and layers from his instrumentalist's mind's eye, selected percussion and electronics. Despite the ensemble having been expanded, often this is a less condensed and distorted music than that of the Alpine

Songs. 'Point ZERO - Part I', which immediately follows the 'Cedroni', builds to a noisy and ferocious climax, which dissipates into the clouds and low sound clusters which comprise 'Point ZERO - Part II'. The third part is a brief, minimalist interlude, and the fourth and final part ends repeatedly between a collage phrase and a simple rock riff before expanding into slurring, slowly integrated phrases. As far as I know, Müller hasn't done anything quite like this before, and it's interesting to hear how, and often how well, Vapor Del Cuore adapt to his unique way of working.

**TRIO SOWARI**  
THREE DANCES  
POTLUCK CD  
BY CLIVE RISL

Tri Sowari has a model of European cooperation, a group that could supply a soundtrack for some major EU gathering of dignitaries. Phil Durant from London, Bertrand Gauthier from Switzerland, residing in Paris, and Burkhard Berna from Germany, recorded in a French studio and released on a French label. On second thoughts, Tri Sowari's vocabulary, the noise of busy wind and industrial evocation, may not appeal to many pianoists seeking of leafcutter. The organisation of those sounds is intensely musical, a combo of painstaking patience and improvisational juggling, but the sounds themselves are hardly ever 'musical'.

The fairly twinky of Berna's music box of the '80s 'Boîtes' comes quite a shock. His percussive and generally fizzy grrrrr sounds like a wife, while Gauthier purrs all through his tenor sax to produce any god-john. Butcher sound like so long as it's not a note. Group leader Durant's electronics have a remarkable personality and merge well with Gauthier's world of beats. On 'Boîtes' Durant goes old school with satisfying sparseness, while we imagine he's twiddling and dice throwing.

The concepts underlying this music may have been forged in the icy subterranean caves of Reductionism, but there's generally plenty going on. On the pace a slow, but you would never describe these three 'dances' as meditative. Superficially it may sound like white coated folk running equipment tests at your local biotech lab, but the important thing is that these concepts are firmly grasped. This is disciplined, focused music; the sound of people really thriving and playing, and close attention is consistently rewarded.

**PATTY WATERS**  
HAPPINESS IS A THING CALLED  
JOE  
DEK WORKS CD  
BY DAVID KEEDAN

Happiness Is A Thing Called Joe marks vocal and free improviser Patty Waters' first new recording since her return to live work in 2002. It's a document of a live set recorded in San Francisco with bassist Seward McCann and pianist Leonard Thompson in 2002, and besides a reading of her own 'Moor', 'Don't Come Tonight', drawn from her 1986 ESP-Disk album, Sing, it's made up entirely of standards along the lines of 'He's Funny That Way', 'Loverman', 'Feastin' Rhythm' and 'St Louis Blues'. Waters herself sees it as a tribute to Billie Holiday and her music. Given the historical weight of the

material and the limited palette of her accompanists, there's little opportunity for Waters to navigate the furthest reaches of the music in the way she did on massively dislocated early recordings like her version of 'Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair'. Instead we get some fairly faithful, pleasantly atmospheric renderings of some of Waters' favourite songs.

Her voice is smaller and huskier than it once was but there's tons of spirit to her readings, and that beautiful whisper remains instantly identifiable. But as with her previous album, 1998's *Love Songs*, the biggest snag has with her backing musicians. The pianist is particularly wretched, mugging cocktail shapes and dentily peared runs into every breath. Left with little space to roam, Waters comes across merely as an incompletely jazz singer. And she is so much more, as anyone who witnessed her set at Le Weekend in 2003 with Bertrand Gauthier and Tizzi Vogel will tell you. Although Waters seems to have lost confidence in her own delicately spiced piano playing, she was always her own best accompanist. We can only hope that she will return to the instrument at some point. This is an inoffensive stop gap but more committed Waters exercises will be disappointed at the lack of real meat. Maybe next time?

**ZEROPING (WITH GUEST  
ARTIST BJ COLE)**  
MASTERS OF WAR  
INCHINGERS MEDIA CD  
BY MICK SOUTHWARD

Born of dugout by big business, big media, big government and big guns, *Masters Of War* is a warreness not only of Bob Dylan's iconic 1963 protest song, but the protest song itself. The songs do more than protest in the minds of their listeners, however. Discarded under a Creative Commons license, they are intended to be copied, downloaded, uploaded, remixed and reprinted for any non-commercial purpose, and were already freely available on the Internet before this CD release. Zeroping bring together American scientist Konrad Knorr, who has tended in London his own New and Berlin. His partner in protest is Tel Aviv based sonic experimentalist Chen Lee, also Sonoreverence.

As well as making the anti-war protest, they also deal with Cold War paranoia and assassination fantasies. 'Assassination Postcard' puts its drum machine beats up against guest BJ Cole's steel guitar. Meanwhile Knorr snarls 'Happy Birthday Mr President', wanting to sum Martin Monroe's tribute to President Kennedy into something far more deadly for the 49th incumbent. 'Masters Of War' itself is given a new and powerful edge, with a fierce onus beat and heavy bass drum that's power it along, sinking to a molasses middle passage for Knorr to pledge to the masters of war that he wants them dead and will follow their caskets to a grave he would happily dig for them.

As well as the project's five original recordings, there are four remakes. Sonoreverence remakes 'Masters Of War' into a frenziedly paced synth-beat piece, which at times has the innuendo of helicopter blades and at others is a cartoonish squawk. Chen Lee's cover work 'Assassination Postcard' into 'Mr President', incorporating samples from the news coverage of Kennedy's shooting in an intransigent act of disgust against their leaders. □

# Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

## COBRA KILLER & KAPAIKOS DAS MANDOLINENORCHESTER MONIKA CD

There must've been plenty of jabs to be had round the Monika offices the day Berlin motorpsych/digital hardcore duo Cobra Killer announced their plan to record a chunk of their back catalogue for an orchestra of mandolins. But the results are actually less like the traffic-cone-on-the-head than you might expect and closer to the kind of punk angularity of UK groups like Thee Headcoates and the long-dispersed Dog Faced Hermans. They have a rough, hand-worn feel that's supremely tactile. Minus the digital spiz of their samples, Cobra Killer's songs sound even more like teen rants, threats and come-ons, and a few of these tracks — "A Sheller", "Charme Des Alléage" — wouldn't even sound out of place on a particularly bent volume of *Guns in the Garage*. Others, especially "High In The Pine", are just straightforwardly gorgeous. KapaiKos focus more on the percussive, rhythmic aspect of the mandolin, with repeated, clipped figures gradually accreting hypnotic intent, only for vocalists Gina V D'Orsi and Anniela Leis Toit to punctuate them with some heavily tongued inrhythms. The whole deal is more than listenable and the cover sports the usual curves.

## SIMON FINN MAGIC MOMENTS DURTRUM CD

Simon Finn's recent return to live work and recording a mere three and a half decades after the release of his sole album, *Pass the Distance*, has been one of the most remarkable comebacks of recent times, with his creative powers seemingly unfurled by the intervening years. *Magic Moments* is the first collection of all new material to emerge since then and it'd be gassy for anyone who has experienced his wacky hypnotic live shows. It gathers a clutch of recent performance favourites (three of which — "Welke Taten", "Eros" and "Wanted Love" — previously appeared on last year's silent *Grey Creep EP*) alongside a reworking of one track, "Golden Goddess", that dates back to the time of his first LP. The sound is live, primitive and excited and extremely human, with Finn on acoustic guitar and vocal, accompanied on a few tracks by Jodie Wood, of Sun Dial and Cabinet 93, on flute, recorder and violin. Finn's preceding influence still sounds like Leonard Cohen, and that same kind of cigarette box apocalypticism defines the atmosphere of much of *Magic Moments*. His lyrics are bleak, scabrous and farry, and the combination of violin, acoustic guitar and revealing personal egresses give it the feel of Rolling Thunder/Desire-me Bob Dylan.

## THE JULIE MITTENS RECORDED LIVE 5 MARCH 2003 NO LABEL CD

Live power the improvisations from a group of liberated European thinkers piloted by guitarist Aart-Jan Schakenbos, bassist Michel Van Dam

and drummer Leo Pijnken. The two were originally brought together by a mutual appreciation of the John Coltrane Higher Key improvisations of the John Coltrane orchestra circa *Octet Concert* and that works as a fairly accurate benchmark for the degree of energy and exuberance going on here. Sonorising in the way Schakenbos' relentless explosive angle note dings him an overdriven guitar brings to mind the kind of post-Byers pyrotechnics of Casper Brattman, while the degree of fuzz and distortion almost matches Nuno Asafai's *Masca Rossa* in terms of wall-wallowing fecundity. But the music is less about texture and grit and more about live three-way exchange, and the level of interplay is totally exhilarating, matching the kind of speed of thought agility more commonly associated with free jazz with all the meat of the best rock.

## JONATHAN KANE FEBRUARY TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CD

Kane was the powerhouse drummer behind Savage Blunder/Spearheads/Orion Swans, and since then he's down the drum set for a power/blues minnows like Rhys Chatham and La Monte Young's former Bad Blue Band. Fabrice takes the endless boogies of Fosset Bad Blue Band a few luches closer to the source with a clutch of legumbous blues instruments that work seemingly lessen mechanical rhyme and non-fluid structures into hypnotic cogs in a massively adult psychadelic space. Here, even the slightest flux in rhythmic/melodic detail sounds almost tectonic. Besides Kane's own formalizations, there's a version of the traditional spiritual "Motherless Child" that matches Billie Holiday/Sonny Stitt in terms of ploughing, flattened rock, and a ferocious restaging of Rhys Chatham's special "Guitar Rho".

## OMIT TRACER HOLLYSBURG 2CD

Been a while since we heard so much as a bleep from New Zealand's Omit aka hamlet bedfellow squatulant Clinton Willarne, but this massive double CD set more than fills the gaps. Originally released on CD-R by SySeuler, tracer has been fully updated by Record Store, with a swanky-looking letterpress/silk-screened sleeve. The feel remains deeply homespun, with analogue synths, primitive drum machines, bi-angled electronics, lope loops and a boatload of effects combined in acid assemblages that cross moments of documentary-style field recordings with beautiful processuals that recall the more austere ambient works of Amano Tatche and Klaus Schulze. Other parts are a little more acknowledging like music for a 1960s BBC sci-fi serial, but even here there's something supremely melancholy about the forebome play of analogous codes around little signs of synthesized melody. Indeed, this one might even top Caput Hereticum's *Quad Triplet* CD set as the best Omit release to date.

## THE USAISAMONSTER WOHAW LOMO CD

The USAISAMONSTER play psychotic, high energy Acid rock à la *Locust Abortion* Techno-ens' Butthole Surfers. It's all executed with the kind of dynamic, "on the time" flash of the classiest of Lead players and enough rurality to leave them sounding as hep as hell like The Buttholes before them. The USAISAMONSTER obviously have the same reverence for Black Sabbath as owners of brain-blowing tribal whangs, and a whole batch of cultic Metal moves here are obviously derived from Tony Iommi's vision of proto-magic circa *Master Of Reality*, along with a quirky take on authentic wuxiayu ballads that's somewhere between MX-80s avant-garde monologues, John S. Morris' Ming Moos goths and the inimitable String Beans' ridiculous rhymes to innobots. Parts of this might be a little too needlessly grinchy and quote-heavy for the average fan of sound-as-sound, but for us daboms it sits just fine.

## WHITE/LIGHT WHITE/LIGHT WHITE/LIGHT WHITE/LIGHT

White/Light is the Velvets-floated duo of Matt Clark and Jeremy Lemos, who both have roots in the contemporary underground. Clark played in Chicago's John Of Oz, while Lemos has associations with Sonic Youth and Jim O'Rourke through his soundboard work. Together the pair work huge cycles of melodic tones into repeat cycles as evocatively wired as "Neurobust"-era Faust, only to staccato them to great monolithic rift bars of the classic Melting Earth tradition. "2B-43" is the album's centerpiece, with sick, cast-iron rifts bleeding rust and shrapnel fire in a way that best approximates the feel of wearing ice boots in zero gravity. The closing track, "04/45", is a split for the candyfloss and come-down feel of Serie Boen's tracks on Spacemen 3's *Playing With Fire* album.

## LLOYD WYATT UNTITLED

Feed & Seed 3" CD-R  
Feed & Seed is a great new CD-R label based in the northeast of America and run by Daniel Prenzel, a member of Astral Blissing, who also features Paul Labrecque of Subsumed Hand Of The Man and who opened the second day of the now legendary Bartelboro Free Folk Fest back in May of 2003. Lloyd Wyatt is Prenzel's performance pseudonym and Untitled is a beauty, a sparsely populated dream piece scored for Acetone organ, Harmony guitar, fuzzface and voice who echo "on the last sign of red leaves" in Asheville, North Carolina. It's a gorgeous piece of music, one that carves slow burning afterimages into the air in the manner of Mirr's later, more instrumentally dense work, or the early Scores short organ recordings. Either way, this is the kind of dense work that's firmly anchored in a warp of identifiable sounds and that implies so many

phantom melodies that every time you listen to it, it seems to have subtly altered its appearance.

## ED YAZIJIAN SIX WAYS TO AVOID THE EVIL EYE

CDIN RECORDING CD CD-R

Violinist and steel guitarist Ed Yazjian aka Dr Ewenn Yiji has played the Lee Underwood to Dredd Fools' Tim Buckley for the past few decades with barely a thought to the contours of his own musical soil — so much so that my jaw nearly hit the desk when I unwrapped this, his first ever solo album, released on his newly minted Djin Recording Company. For anyone expecting a series of solo violin and guitar medleys, *Six Ways To Avoid The Evil Eye* will come as a real curveball, as the central orbit around which most of these tracks swing is mostly based in rhythmic/crosscultural ritual in a way that most immediately brings to mind of the Anga Maculek back catalogue. There's a heavy, devotional air to much of the activity that speaks of personal trance as elegantly as the works of Alice Coltrane, albeit transposed to a much more primitive/puritanistic pair of hand drums, bows and traditional acoustic chores. A track like "Kromop" (Djinn Nine) would fit beautifully into one of the more nocturnal volumes of *Blue Sun City* or *Carnival Folklore Resurrection* series, its combination of bells, metal percussion and finely vocalized enough to illuminate the darkest night of the soul, while "Orange Sky Black Cross" is a psychiatric devotional as firmly grounded in the tradition of music sculpted by the hands of humans as anything from Sandy Bull or MV & EE's *Medicine Show*.

## YURA YURA TEIKOKU NAMA.SHIBI.RE.NA.MA.ME.MAJI MEISHI KEY CO

Most western ears will be familiar with Tokyo psych/punk Imo Yura Yura Teikoku from their appearance on PS1's *Tokyo Flashback* series, but back home these guys have somehow reached almost stadium-scale levels of teen adoration, with back rooms support from producer Yukihiro of White Heaven and Stars, and occasional guest spots from White Heaven, Stars, Ghost and Dameon & Naomi guitarist Motoi Kusunori. Indeed, Kusunori himself describes them as "the greatest band in the world", the staggeringly titled Nama, Shi, Bi, Ra, Ma, Ma, Ma. It was a 2003 live album repackaged for non-domestic consumption by the US Metal Key label. It makes a fine introduction to the group that touches on a host of operating bases, from brain-busting, well-damaged acid rock through power pop à la Raspberries/Big Star and dark Velvet-influenced rock in the mode of shady Japanese legends like The Jacks. There's something about the fidelity of this live set that's particularly electrifying in a way that gives it the edge over previous studio albums like *Alma* and makes for one of their most consistently impressive outings to date. □



# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## THE BUG FEATURING WARRIOR QUEEN

DEM A BOMB WE

LADYBUG 1"

Out on the perimeter of reggaeton there exist extreme strains that might once have been related to dancemall midriffs, but which now pulse at such a velocity that all comparisons are void. The primary source of these mutations was Kevin Marin also the Bug who, despite his savage intent, still always manages to trace his link back to the reggae font. His new label is launched as a collaboration vehicle for female MCs and shakers, and debuts *Warrior Queen* and a fevered meditation on London after the July bombs. Her opening, instantly frosty sponion line "...some crazy masterpiece out did" echoes Janice Marin's "...apple out did" ("apple" meaning sponion or dosey) from "Police And Thieves", whose sounds almost perfectly compare with this blast, rashing like a bitter wind through the streets of the capital. This is true reggaemusic production style - Kevin stills *Warrior Queen* the beats, she rapped the instant reply and now the tune is on the street.

## BURNING BABYLON STEREO MASH UP

MARS 10

*Stereo Mash Up* is the fifth release by Skade Anderson aka Burning Babylon and a follow up to last year's *Knives & The Treble*. Since the last album, Anderson has come on the studio experimentation in the certain knowledge that hard work will take him whenever he wants to go. Although at times the sound may be a little miasmic, as is the case with all early stage one-man operations, this is a collection of conscious variation and experimentation ranging from the sweet and light ("Pressure Test") - which sounds like Two Tone melodies recollected in a frosty dream - through to R&B/Cash-style guitar-driven Kastab rockers like "Danassi Version", to tougher dancehall and deeply dubby excursions sourced with a better class of vocal sample.

## DUB GABRIEL BASS JIHAD

AZRA 10

If 2003's *Ascend* was bass heavy, then this time around Dub Gabriel dials every other element up in the mix to create a massively森音 sound that hones between the incomparable Matamasis and the later work of the inimitable Muunguizulu. After "War In The Poppy Fields", aka Tom Naszom and chopping out on sea over martial percussions and an obligatory Gravels-style fluid loop, this starts getting serious. "Zooty" is a big pan-African street parade with elephardine percusion and cloching ourobori symbols - a slow, deliberate lurch towards the rest of the album's finish.

Dub Gabriel's concerns are more cultural than the consistently highly defined political focus of his sonic mentor Bry Jones - hence the dedication to the major Sufi poet of divine love, Jelaluddin Rumi, on the album's most lyrical and meditative cut, "Rumi Go Through Me". But

the monstrous short organ drone that opens and threads through the densely textured "Garden In The Light In The Shade Of Grey" scores the greatest impact on the set, while triggering a surely impossible longing to hear Terry Riley in Dub.

## THE HEPTONES

### NIGHT FOOD OUTTAKES & BLACK ARK SESSIONS

ALBUMX 10

Having moved on from their golden pealed at Studio One with Clement Dodd, The Heptones were picked up by Island in the reggae feeding frenzy of the mid-70s. Over 1976 and 1977, they cut *Night Food* with Harry J and Perry Price. The first was a clean, commercial attempt at a "back to the roots" song set with a mix of relics of earlier hits and killer new tunes. Session's production engine at Black Ark was at full steam so the follow-up was a much more steamy affair availed in the producer's signature swirly, viscous sound. Outtakes from the Perry sessions have already surfaced on sets such as *Anthology*, but appearing for the first time now is a bunch of genuinely unreleased riddles from reggae's most influential vocal harmony group.

Although they come without the sugary overdues that plagued the original album, the late appearance of these tunes show that their exclusion from the final track list was justified. They are clearly inferior to those that made it, though these are funny duds. The Weavers Boys, especially "Hill Dub", the version to the sonically conscious observation "Bring Up On A Hill". The four alternative extended cuts of contemporary Party tracks are a real bonus. Both "Mystery Party" and "Service" feature mystery DJ Rancing King and then an inverse of "Pressure Test" - Se what threatened to be merely an interesting release for reggae archivists becomes a must for Perry fans.

## INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER ALL PLAYED OUT

ROUND TRIP MARS 10

Just as it looked like New Zealand had a surfeit of slick, soul-stylin' reggae groups, the reprise of the International Observer like Tom Bailey and Mason operator Solar Rarotonga weighs the balance towards tuffie dubwise sounds. He'll ram a long way to bury his old vinyl pedipins and herring red painted in the inscriptions, but he should focus up to the fact that he will always be a recovering Thompson Twin. But there's no shame in producing such a well crafted album - the follow up to 2000's *Seen on Shirley J's Round Trip Mars* label - that outperforms many top drawer UK roots acts.

The slow sliding into the opener "Leaf Mold", complete with solo cackles, has multiple fire starts before settling the slow but hard steppers pace that runs through the impressive set. "Freiburg Prince Nat" was written especially for an Auckland show that was cancelled due to stormy weather, while "Seedman's Dub" was recorded for an om-GM stereo in Auckland. "London Dub", meanwhile, was written in a fit of

uncontrollable, but obviously misplaced nostalgia for the London Underground's Northern Line.

## AUGUSTUS PABLO

### AUGUSTUS PABLO AT KING TUBBYS

ATTACK 10

Pablo is represented as both interpreter and innovator on this *Berry Stiker*. Lee produced self compiled from singles, album tracks and dub version slips where Lee was in control - hence the direct relationship with Tubby. These are classic toasting tracks honed from the early *Thiver* and cut in the shape of "No Jeasting Pablo", "Rough Pablo" and "Every Dub I Own" - an introductus to the Bread pop hit "Everything I Own", made popular in Jamaica via Ken Boothe's sweet version. There are covers too of Neil Diamond's everyone "Barbaree (An His Underpants)", The Wailers' "Put It On", Burning Spear's "Fragile Head" and the Impressions' "Queen Of The Minstrels".

But it's on two versions of popular song that Pablo excels as interpreter, an art which he is rarely credited. His take on "My Home", the flip of Berry's tribute to R&B supervisor Joe Belvin, manages to hit one of those melodic spots that raises the hairs on the back of your neck. As for his version of Bart Bachrach's "A House Is Not A Home", it's clear that for Tubby this was not a job but more a labor of love. He energises the rhythm through a mix that's threaded by Pablo in a true jazz improv style.

## MAX ROMEO

### CRAZY WORLD OF DUB

JAMMING RECORDINGS 10

Another against anchor singer from Jamaican recordings that turns out duds. Perhaps the only thing "crazy" about the album is the fact that the concept avoided production. Max Romeo is best perhaps best known for his accidental "ride" in "Hell Dream", but more creditably for his work with Niney and Scratch, culminating in the roots classic "War Irie Babylon". Like many other talented Jamaican singers, though, he took paying gigs where he could. This is pleasantly straightforward, Burnie Lee produced album consists of a few one-way rhythms and a bunch of covers, including Ken Boothe's "Arribella", Little Roy's "War", Peter Tosh's "Steppin' Road" and "Legislate It", John Holt's "The Clock" and The Wailers' "Keep On Moving".

## PRESSURE FEATURING WARRIOR QUEEN

### MONEY HONEY

HYPERDUB 10"

Kode9 & Daddi G reserve the Hyperdub 10" vinyl imprint series for their own work, while the 12" format is for guests. The first outing comes from the mysterious Burnali with the genre-leading South London Broughs EP closing with ghostriders in heavier sonic terrains. The equally anonymous Pressure links with in-demand Warner Queen to focus on the frustrations of a woman's role in the more domestic daily agenda, concentrating on the

minutiae of getting by in the city. The track opens with what sounds like a recreated soundtrack from Roger Corman's *Premature Bondi*, with mournful organ and gasping breaths before the beats come down, developing into a tenuously rhythmic beat consisting of a series of collapsing and colliding breaks. The extended mix stretches the breaks into lighter, shimmering waves with the Queen getting the dubbed-up treatment after a more comfortable rep. Deciphering the chat will need further research.

## U ROY & KING TUBBY

### U ROY MEETS KING TUBBYS

ATTACK 10

U Roy may not have been the most militant or lyrically creative DJ, but boy, could he really swing. This excellent tussle through his releases out for Burnie Lee in the late 80s - a period that probably might be seen as journeymen output - could probably be seen as his finest hour, alongside the last *Channer One Right Time* sessions. And let's not forget that Deddy High Roy was also there to partner Tubby as his lead MC on the *Hometown Hi Fi* sound, as Tuba dabbled down the jazzy fences that bound the dance with waves of echo and reverb, while the DJ tooted his dubplate with meaty puffs. The story here is yet another Burnie Lee reconfiguration, has U Roy scoring over Camel Campbell's "The Geiger" and "I Shall Not Remove", Johnny Clarke's "Every Knee Shall Bow", "Creation Rebe" and "Rock With Me", with dubwise version action from the master excursions from King Ruddy.

## VARIOUS

### DUB RARITIES BOX SET

TRIBAL 10

"Tribal", the Wal-Mart of reggae labels, stacks 'em up and ships 'em out in such a rapid fashion that one could be forgiven for ignoring the Box Set series - cheap, really packaged, usually containing lots of filler and not much in the way of killer. This one might look cheap and nasty at a tenner a shot, but the killer song more than makes up for the filler. This is a fairly random set of 50 mostly 70s dub authored by Lee Perry, Natty, Bigg Rude, his brother Blackhead, Pablo, Burnie Lee and Uncle Thompson.

The complaints that most of these tracks are new to CD, though, let's not waste our time arguing that one when we have some classics like The Oberyners' "Headline", the wizened "Sierra Ninehounds Gone To Hell", the Big Woz DJ cut on Dennis Brown's interpretation of "My Time", and "Selling Water", an unmissable wah-wah guitar duet to the same singer's "Westbound Town". The amiable "Iron Fist" from 1979 creates a template for the digital revolution that was to follow five years later.

There are several Poco scratches, including "Doin' In Time" (still looking for the vocal version to this time, please) and the fabulous "Iron Well", with dubbed harmony charts and what sounds like a wah-wah organ running right through the mix. It's a dub to Burnie and Ricky's "Freedom Fighter", though I cannot recall the 7" flipside being so wild. □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## CALIKA

SMALL TALK KILLS ME  
ACROBULB CD

It's easy to become lost in the more pronounced tracks that constitute each of the tracks on Simon Kelehan's debut release, and maybe that's no bad thing. A conversation made up of glancing details and passing asides can sometimes be a pleasant way to pass the time. Starting with sounds created on dismantled pianos, harps, mouth organs and fragments of wordless song, Kelehan's intricate manipulations tend to play around with the pace and fragmented rhythm of events rather than their dynamics, which means that the range of each piece rarely strays far beyond exchanges pertaining to recent changes in the weather, or the late return of the team. But then the making of bold statements, even on the lethal subject of small talk, tends to be frowned upon during these dangerous times.

**DAVID CHESWORTH**  
FIFTY SYNTHESIZER GREATS  
VMMNC CD

**DAVID CHESWORTH**  
ENSEMBLE

MUSIC TO SEE THROUGH  
VMMNC CD

Despite boasting only 37 individual tracks, Australian composer David Cheskorth's *Fifty Synthesizer Greats* redeems itself by featuring some of the best electrotones ever. In them Cheskorth describes working at a plastics factory in the late 1970s to earn enough money to buy an Akai 4000 DS reel-to-reel tape recorder, becoming a Korg T009 monophonic synthesizer from a local group and knocking off this charming selection of pop jingles on his parents' living room table in the closing months of 1978. Fast forward to *Music To See Through*, a two disc collection of compositions for electronics and acoustic ensemble, and we find a less talkative but far more accomplished man at work. A quiet intensity and a thoughtful concentration pervade each piece, resulting in some quite luminous moments. All the same, you can't help listening out for the kid at the Korg, sitting in his parents' lounge, trying to forget his day at the plastics factory.

## JASPER LEYLAND

### CAPSIZE

STRAW DOG ARMY CD

Jasper Leyland is the alias of Norwich based producer Jonathan Bewicke, whose pieces derive much of their charm from his meticulous laptop explorations of extended sonic periods. The title track on his debut release builds up a gentle forward motion through the slowly rattling repetition of a series of chimes; the faint sounds of distant belltolls and a sequence of light rhythmic pulsations give the piece a lot of its character. The other three cuts on this EP show a similar predilection and focus in their thoughtful development, so that even the false ending on closing track "Copper" works well for him.

## MAGNETOPHONE

THE MAN WHO ATE THE MAN  
4AD CD

Four years on from their debut album, *I Guess I Need To Be Reminded Of How Much You Love Me*, John and Matt Phone have learned to play a cap or some of their twittish, more distractingly high energy moments without losing any of the invention or drive. With a little help from sussus Kim and Kelley Deal from The Breeders, and underground songwriter PG SARIO Magnethophone's second album has a sturdier feel to it, enhancing the intricate surface flash of the electronics. Melody lines have been refined, beats are kept simpler, and the result is something far more coherent and complex than its predecessor. Their collaborations with King Cheskorth on "A Sad His His (Canted My Demise)" and "...And May Your Last Words Be A Chance To Make Things Better", which also features a sublime vocal contribution from HMS Ginalots, are particularly tender highlights. This has definitely been worth the wait.

## MARCONI UNION

### DISTANCE

ALL SAINTS CD

It's entirely probable that, when cinema ceases to maintain a separate existence as an art form, it will continue to survive as a type of music. Its influence upon notions of content, atmosphere and treatment will continue to be felt long after the

last torrent has swept film away, leaving only a set of downloadable audiosvisual components in its wake. In other words, we may already inhabit a world where movie soundtracks increasingly outstrip their actual movies. *Distance*, the second release from redasse Manchester duo Marconi Union, provides convincing evidence that this process has taken on an elegant life of its own. Darkly structured and sensitively performed, each of the seven compositions is a burnished and reflective set of surfaces, beautifully blank and capable of capturing the attention. All we need now is a darkened room.

## SON OF ROSE

SON OF ROSE  
DIAGONES ETC CD

Although Seattle producer Kenmen Sadeghi's parents first moved with him from Iran to America shortly after the country's Islamic Revolution, he still grew up in a home constantly filled with the sounds of Persian folk and pop music rather than the culturally banishing white noise of broadcast-TV. The music he creates as Son Of Rose may owe more to "numerically specific frequencies" than rhythms and melodies, there's a unique delicacy and poise to his compositions. More like digital scrims made up of fluctuating groupings of microscopic events, all six tracks on this limited edition debut EP manage to establish precise boundaries and parameters, so that forms gently manifest themselves through the accumulated flow of minute activities.

## STACS OF STAMINA

TIVOLI  
WIKENDS CO

What flies this outstanding workout from Swedish B-Boy crew Stacs Of Stamina over from a crucial beat production to an electronics offering is the serious intent with which they tweak the SID chip melodies over heavily compressed beats. Coming on strong, like a Commodore 64 running a mouthy version of *Last Ninja*, every track has the wild kinetics feel of an early videogame. The graphics are brighter than they are distorted, and the sound is a crosshatched mess, but it's still an unbearable combination. Electro as sublime thump candy.

The themes are subtle and complex, with killer contributions from guest MCs One-Two, Mike Ladd and François TIC that go well with the flowing waveforms, silencing background effects and relentless, accelerating pace.

## SUPER NUMERI

### THE WELCOME TABLE

NAH TUNE CD

Whether your first encounter with occult space rockers Super Numeri takes place in their native Liverpool or somewhere close within the Home Head Nebula, the concentrated energy with which they are busy constructing their own dimension will quickly impress itself upon you. Their hypnotic jangling guitars, rattling drum delays and asperine collective compositions belong in a parallel universe where time and space continue to unfold in configurations that correspond directly to the time signatures on some unexpected early Can album. Check out the magnificent 24 minute sprawl that is "The First League Of Angels" and believe that these really are better worlds out there than this one.

## SIMON FISHER TURNER

### LANA LARA LATA

MUTE CD

With each new release, Simon Fisher Turner apposes himself even further down a data stream of his own devising that is both alien and reassuring. Less of a composer these days than a sublimely gifted organiser of information, his projects no longer seem confined to just one approach or channel. His latest twin disc offering is three different assemblages in one package, *Lana*, subtitled "Music Between Noise". Is a CD collection of beguiling featherweight musical collaborations with French sound artist Romain Lemoine and Italian electronic duo Tu M. *Lana*, also designated "Photographs Fades Fades", is a DVD selection of dispassionate asides of studio cut together by Sebastian Shaqqa. Finally, *Jata* is a composition on tape, programmed by Paul Farmer, which allows the user to create "Rotations Colours Sounds" on a home computer. As usual, Turner's deep sensitivity and sympathetic approach to his material are what pull it together and give it life. □



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# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## THE GEORGE BURT/RAYMOND MACDONALD QUINTET HOTEL DILETTANTE TEXTILE CD

Scandinavian George Burt and saxophonist Raymond MacDonald front a quintet with double bassist George Lytle, drummer Allan Pardue and Nicola Macdonald singing and playing melodic, *On Hotel Dilettante* are joined by regular guest Lori Casdorph on soprano and by Sudhi K. Dace from Future Pilot. AKA playing bass and theremin. The group are pleasingly free from Improv clichés and there's a rock intermission and loose jamming flavour to most of this studio set. Nicola MacDonald's laid back and understated contribution, vocal and instrumentally, is a sure indication of what the group are all about — you can tell the musicians feel that there's not much that could be better than getting together and making their music, and it's a pleasure to listen along with them.

## MICHEL DONEDA SOLO LA PLANOUES SCRAMMUS/CABELLOON CD

20 years on from his debut recording *Terra* (Naxos), French soprano saxophone artist Michel Doneda shows no inclination to abandon his tenure of musical extremity. For this inaugural release on the Norwegian Sola label's limited edition Silken subsidiary his instrument is, as ever in his hands, stripped bare of its inherent identity, blown like an airtight concert with breath sounds amplified, and merging into sustained multiphonics and ambient whispers. The *Chapelle De Las Planques* in Taras, southern France, was the venue for this recording in July 2004. The contemplative nature of the place is reflected in the music, which, although uncompromising, is crafted with great care, patience and sustained meditative concentration.

## MARK DRESSER/ DENMAN MARONEY TIME CHANGES CRYPTOGRAMMOPHONE CD

## MARK DRESSER UNVEIL CLEAN FEED CD

Time Changes finds technically superb double bassist Mark Dresser embedded in a sleeve jazz outfit with Denman Maroney's hyperpiano, Michael Salis's erums and anger Alainneira Martino. Much of the programme is an elegant demonstration of collective juggling in terms of tempo and rhythm, contralto shifts and detours executed with apparent ease. Occasionally that tight control yields to incursions of more eccentric improvising — less chaotic technically — making play with textual contrast and other less measurable elements that extend the music's spectrum of interest.

The full breadth of Dresser's artistry is presented on Unveil, a solo double bass record that grips the attention from start to finish. Dresser makes a case for it as a collaboration with the engineering skills of producer Riz Meesne, who manages to capture and mix the voluminous sounding of the bass body with

details registered through pickups built into the instrument to maximise its high frequencies. A graphic showcase for the adapted bass and of Dresser's exceptional virtuosity, *Unveil* is far more than a staged demonstration — there's epic scope to the music's imaginative breadth and to the creative energy that sweeps through it.

## BARRY GUY NEW ORCHESTRA OORT-ENTROPY INTAKT CD

The London Jazz Composers Orchestra was Barry Guy's earlier vehicle to make his challenging compositions for a large group of improvising musicians. His New Orchestra is a predictably worthy sequel — Guy directing and playing double bass with ten top flight collaborators. *Oort-Entropy* is a three-part work, conceptually sophisticated, sonorously austere, performed with commitment and sensitivity. The line-up includes old allies — saxophonist Euan Pinner and percussionist Paul Lytle — and less familiar figures such as pianist Agusti Fernández and Per Åke Holmlund on tuba. Ensemble avaris and rapid fire trilling dispense into knotty, complexed arias; some images of cohesion contesting with centrifugal action. Expressive spontaneity is second nature for Instrumentalists such as saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and trombonist Johannes Bäcker. A major strength of Guy's writing for these players is that it stores them into emotional resonators and mood frames they might otherwise shun, thus expanding their expressiveness.

## PAAL NILSEN-LOVE TOWNNORCHESTRAHOUSE CLEAN FEED CD

## LARS-GÖRAN ULANDER TRIO LIVE AT GLENN MILLER CAFE AYLER CD

"Torn", which opens Townnorchestrahouse, bursts into life fully fledged with Nilsen-Love's restless percussive bounce and Ingbrigt Håker Flaten's capacious, thumbing bass providing a rhythmic trampoline beneath Enn Pärlér's tenor and Sten Sandell's piano. Pärlér sounds wonderfully gauzy and pugnacious, Sandell precise and unpredictable. Various within the quartet shift as the first half hour passes, the initial urgency ebb and flows but Nilsen-Love's animated tension remains constant. It's there, too, throughout the second 3D minutes with Pärlér gracefully soaring and swooping on soprano to begin with, and Sandell extracting mewling hollowness and glisten from the keyboard. A brief piano concluding with a touch of swingier. The collective vigour that pulses through this finely played and set out is exhilarating.

Nilsen-Love and bassist Paal Danielsson form the rhythm section for Lars-Göran Ulander, an alto saxophonist who has flourished on the Scandinavian jazz scene for many years, but makes his debut here as leader. Composers, widely known for his work with Keith Jarrett, plays with smooth desirability that on paper seems at odds with Nilsen-Love's wilder belligerence. In practice they combine effectively

sunting well Ulander's manner of edging sinuously around melodic material and teasing at it until it frays; he pushes doggedly until he unlocks an additional reserve of ardour. In the course of the probing, Danielsson and Nilsen-Love have ample opportunity to state their own case. Townnorchestrahouse is more wistful, but enthusiasts for Nilsen-Love's powerful and lively drumming will appreciate his input into the the recording too.

## QUARTET NOIR LUGANO VICTO CD

Gal in black, staring out from the cover of *Lugano* are pianist Marilyn Crispell, drummer Fred Heuser, saxophonist Urs Laimgruber and bassist Joelle Léandre. There's a quality assurance in this composition; beyond the sober dress, these are serious people. The music, in three parts, was recorded in Lugano, Switzerland over a year ago. Laimgruber draws highly disciplined squeaks, muffled tones and strident pulsars from tenor and soprano. Léandre bows fragile harmonics or digs deep into the reverberant body of her instrument; Crispell plays a series of delicate chirps, purishes clusters or launches explosive runs along the keyboard; Heuser bows symbols, clatters, clicks and judders percussion. There's astute beauty in the outcome: a quartet mobile and fluid in alignment, with unpredictable conjunctions rather than a crystallised collective identity — at least until the second half of the final part when the elements congeal for a while into a chugging group vocal. That soon dissipates once more, leaving Crispell's delicate phrasings cooing with gentle cymal wash.

## IRINE SCHWEIZER PORTRAIT INTAKT CD

## LIVE AT TAKTLOS INTAKT CD

Portrat is a marvellous introduction to Schweizer's playing, 14 tracks compiled from the Intakt catalogue display the Siles pianist solo, in duets with drummers Louis Moholo, Pierre Favre, Günter Sommer, Han Bennink and Andrew Cyrille, with saxophonists Orna Ziegler and Co. Stein and trombonist George Lewis, and in trio with singer Maggie Nicols and bassist Joelle Léandre, and notably with saxophonist Fred Andersen and drummer Hanil Drøse. That list of musical associates maps out the territory Schweizer occupies with her dynamism, rhythmic ingenuity and inclusive practice of improvising. She handily celebrates the impact of Monk, Cecil Taylor and Dollar Brand while remaining lucidly and exhaustively herself. An 80-page booklet with essays and an interview ices the cake. And when you've sampled that enticing selection you'll surely want more. Live At Taktlos recorded at a Zurich festival in 1984 and issued on vinyl two years later, opens with the same George Lewis duet that is featured on *Portrait*, You can sing first by Nicola, then by Léandre, stamp a theatrical aspect on what follows. Schweizer's capacity to heighten and give depth to the dramatic aspect generates plenty of

excitement, especially with Sommer and Pauli Lovens drumming. This is a welcome release but for the main comprehensive picture *Portrait* is a great place to start.

## DAVID TAYLOR/STEVE SWELL QUINTET NOT JUST.... CIMP CD

Bass trombonists are a rare breed and David Taylor's versatility on the instrument has projected him into playing contexts that include the New York Philharmonic, Arctic Franklin, Duke Ellington and Steve Reich. *On Not Just...*, he is heard at length in an unusual instrumental combination with the standard timbres of CIMP stalwart Steve Swell, cellist Tomas Lisch, bassist Kent Flato and violinist Billy Bang. The co-leaders furnish three compositions each. Bang provides the aptly named "Down Home" and there are a couple of entirely improvised pieces. This quintet explores the options from double wug, though tight ensemble cells and formal chamber interplay to textured abstraction. Bang, alone in the upper register, introduces folksy elements as well as more austere monotonous alp and alida. His slightly abrasive tone often locates him as the music's focal point and his playing — both purgent and oblique — adds sharp delineation to exchanges occurring in the lower strata.

## THE VANDERMARK 5 THE COLOR OF MEMORY ATLANTIC SKO

## FREE FALL AMSTERDAM PUNK SMALLTOWN SUPERMENZ CD

The Color Of Memory, recorded in Chicago in July 2004, features Jeff Balion on trombone, Tim Daisy drumming, Kent Kessler on double bass, with Vandermark himself and Dave Rempis sorching the reeds. Their high calibre group playing is coordinated with Vandermark's characteristic blend of snappy-edged efficiency, carefully conceived form, muscular and fierce delivery, with a built-in dimension of risk to be negotiated. Dedications of the eight tracks include Art Pepper, Ray Charles, Merce Cunningham and Nino Rota — that range of reference is indicative of some of the disparate currents flowing through the quintet. The musical identity of this Vandermark 5, focusing Bishop for the last time, is fully integrated yet open to all kinds of connections — a mature group delivered at the peak of its form.

The two Free Fall, paying homage in their name to Jimmy Giuffre's remarkable 1962 album with Paul Bley and Steve Swell, cuts. Vandermark in a generally more mellow and reflective light, though it still sounds thoroughly convincing on clarinet. He is joined on the second release by a pair of fine Norwegian musicians — pianist Håvard Wiik and Ingbrigt Håker Flaten on double bass. Wiik is an expressive harmonic colourist, Håker Flaten a sturdy pivot and articulate soloist, while Vandermark confirms his adaptability, retaining his cutting edge in this more spacious context even when the mood is introspective. □

# Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

## GERALD BARRY

THE INTELLIGENCE PARK  
NMC 2XCD

## TRIO FIBONACCI

INDEPENDENCE QUADRILLES  
NMC CD

Frank depictions of S&M relationships in Gerald Barry's new opera *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* are presently upsetting the apple cart at English National Opera, but the most explicit aspect of his music has always been his fully tonal perversions of familiar tonal material. *The Intelligence Park* was Barry's first opera and made a memorably tempestuous impact during its debut performances at the Almeida Opera in 1990. He took as his model Baroque opera and his plot involves an opera composer struggling to contain the characters he's created. Chiaro-oscuro at ecdemal tempo, outlandishly extreme instrumentation and singing passed to the point of hysteria triumphantly overrule the sometimes frantic borrowings from Igor Stravinsky and Kurt Weill.

There's a similarly oblique angle to reality about Barry's piano trio, *In the Asylum* (2000), featured on the *Trio Fibonacci's* survey of recent British music. The disc borrows its title from a seditionist piece by Michael Finnissy, which deconstructs ancient dance forms like John Cage's *In the Zoo* (1961) and the sooty protocols of a Thackeray novel. More Finnissy and pieces by James Clarke accompany.

## LUCIANO BERIO

SINFONIA/EXPHRASIS  
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CD

MIFUNE/BERIO/XENAKIS/  
DASHOW  
SOMMERMUSIC CD

Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* for eight voices and orchestra is a cornerstone of 1960s modernism, a brilliant study of the flow of time that embraces Claude Lévi-Strauss, a joyous fusion of text and sound, and thrives in the scheme from Mahler's second symphony for good measure. In fact, so famous is the section in which Beno collages an astonishing variety of quoted material over Mahler's original, that the rest of the work has suffered neglect. In his second movement, Berio evokes a later period soundtrack from the nightmares of Martin Luther King's name. King was shot as Berio was composing the work, and this moment of vivid newness — like reportage contests telling with Mahler as a pivot around which musical history spins. Conductor Peter Eliot, London Voices and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra deliver a definitive performance.

Exphrasis is contemporary with *Sinfonia* and divides the orchestra into groups that are embedded around the concert hall in *Costa* (1981), the work which opens with the Taigi Mifune's disc. Berio once again derives an orchestral work from an unexpected source, namely his own unaccompanied *Sequence* for solo violin. The highlight of the work sees its energies surge up into a resounding wail like Circe's remnant one of Berio's best-known scores. Excellent performances of Xenakis's

*Mikra* (1971) and *Dolichas* (1979) too, but I can't work up much enthusiasm for the "one size fits all" electronics that dominate James Dashow's piece.

## MARCO BLAAUW

BLAAUW  
SOMMERMUSIC CD

Trumpeter Marcus Blaauw notes that when he was studying the instrument he often wondered why he bothered — "there was hardly any repertoire that I liked to play" to his daemons. Then he discovered that Stockhausen was writing his trumpet son Markus into the action of his *Light* opera cycle, and became inspired to establish a new generation of solo works. The final piece on Blaauw's nestle disc is a scene from *Light* for quartet (trumpet, flugelhorn, and soprano voice). Blaauw's chameleons probably elides the seductive iconoclastic neutrality of Stockhausen's writing about, its expressive weight and creates an exhilarating dialogue with soprano Barbara Hannigan. Other works are mostly solo — Gerald Barry, Richard Ayres, Giacomo Spada and Tuu Takemoto are among the compasists mentioned, but somehow Reayre Saunderson's pensive *Blaauw* stands out.

## MARTIN BRESNICK

MY TWENTIETH CENTURY  
NEW WORLD CD

New York composer Martin Bresnick counts György Ligeti as one of his mentors, and there's something incisive in his deft synthesis of styles of which Ligeti would surely approve. *My Twentieth Century* (2002) has a mentor daedean Tom Andrews's poem celebrating the 1960s counterculture, above pinupscapes writing for a small chamber ensemble. Whether claims for the work as "fragilely (the poem) into a kind of anthem for the '60s counterculture" stand up to examination is doubtful — this music is too old school to be mind-expanding. More stretching are the structural tripodes that Bresnick embeds into his marinista concerto *Grace* (2000), and his fine ear for supple cello and percussion colourings in *Songs of the Mouse People* (1999).

## STEN HANSON

MORE CANNED PORRIDGE  
FIREWORK EDITION RECORDS 2XCD

Swedish artist Sten Hanson has had a mixed career as composer, poet and performance artist. His music is correspondingly removed from the expected vocabulary of contemporary music, and the better for it. A piece like *Kindergarten* (2003) for voice and children's toys is typical of his student approach, as fragmented children's songs popular in the 1940s are accompanied by outbursts from hails sounding percussion and melody instruments.

Hanson is playing with instruments more than "playing them in the usual fashion. When he approaches writing for cello (*Play Power IX*, 1982) and bassoon (*Play Power II*, 1976), his childlike fascination for line and colour produces compelling results, while his extended electronics

works are a not of odd juxtapositions and structural jolts.

## MICHAEL JARRELL

ECO  
ACOUSTIC CD

Swiss composer Michael Jarrell's music can sound inimitably dry and like cd-Pierre Boulez if performed uncaringly, but here the ensemble *Aconite* Note find depth beyond the surface sounds. Most striking is the bass clarinet and ensemble piece *Esams Crôles* (1988-89), which begins with an information overload and then gradually planes down over its 20 minute duration, to arrive at placid harmonies pitched low in the ensemble. *Aus Bebung* (1995) for clarinet and cello makes a virtue of its reduced instrumentation by focusing in on the minutiae of sound production. Players explore different methods of producing the same note, creating a sound palette with in ambiguity and nuance.

## ERIK SATIE

VEXATIONS  
SALON CD

Satie's *Vexations* (1893) has become a cause célèbre within the avant garde, anticipating many of the arguments about the serious intentions, or otherwise, of John Cage's 4'33" by nearly 80 years. It was Cage who first mounted a complete performance of *Vexations* lasting 19 hours in 1963, and the score consists of three lines of music and Satie's instructions "to be repeated 840 times". On this recording, Alan Mates makes do with a mere 40 repetitions (that's 70 minutes worth) but it's enough to reveal the brilliance of Satie's concept. The slippery chameleons he employs mean it's easy to become disorientated even with the piece, and he demands that listeners keep their ears open throughout. Satie issues a visionary warning about the vapid nature of ambient listening, spelling George Winston and weighing in on the side of Morton Feldman before either had been born.

## BERN ALOIS ZIMMERMANN

METAMORPHOSE  
WIRAO CD

Bern Alois Zimmermann was a one-off within post-war German music. He was a hardline modernist who wasn't afraid of quotation and pastiche, a composer who found common cause (probably more successfully than Gunther Schüller) between 12-tone writing and the jazz pieces he created with the *Married School* Quintet and a wacky recipient of a dedicated Edison on Wigg's. Devised to accompany a film by the experimental Swiss film maker Michael Wogalter, *Metamorphose* (1954) switches abruptly between boogie-woogie and cabaret references to outbursts of orchestral dementia. *In péril* (1964) was written for a Michel Ayrel trio (piano and Zimmermann's score ingeniously subjects early 20th century French neoclassicism to a constructivist makeover). *Omnia tempus alienum* is purest serialism for voice and ensemble — Bern Alois Zimmermann in the round. □



New Albion Records  
[www.newalbion.com](http://www.newalbion.com)

# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

## AEMAE

### THE HELICAL WORD

ISOSONO/CDR CD

Intentionally or otherwise, Brandon Neidell has reinvented the wheel through the electronic abstractions he's recorded under the moniker Aemae. Though software of his own design, this Oakland, California code-slinger has deftly mediated the spectral soundscapes generated by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's vocum tubes and filter banks. In its cockpit my projectiles and ionized vaporphoria, *The Helical Word* appears as a so-so anachronism despite its allegiance to digital technologies. Cyclical patterns of sweeping frequencies, granular synthesis and ring modulation form the basis of Neidell's compositions. He constantly reworks the linear progression of his electronic constructions from merely sifting on synapses, making for an exceptional record from this precocious composer.

## MAURIZIO BIANCHI &

### LAND USE

### PSYCHONEUROSE

MANHOLD CD

For a period of some 20 years, Maurizio Bianchi dedicated not to make music at all and dedicate himself to his spiritual life as a Jehovah's Witness. Recently, however, the legendary Industrial abstractionist has returned to making music. While the first few recordings he's invited his stalwart fans with their New Age banalities, *Psychoneurose* is a legitimate return to form. A collaboration with Land Use (the domineering name for the author's unknown musicals David Reed), this album has all the trapping of a Bianchi production, sporting the same electric rupturing and systemic fugacity that *Bianchi* produced as his material albums *Carnevale* and *Endometrio*. Where those works stand as cataclysmic soundtracks for cancers, viral agents and infections streaming into a body already polluted by modern society, this album plays out a similarly bleak drama upon the neurological theatre. Like all of the best *Bianchi* recordings, the listener is cast deep in an abyss bristling with tactile abrasions. As dazed as some of *Bianchi's* electronic sounds are, he's always given himself more than a few effects in translating the grammar of metaphor through sound.

## ANDREW CHALK

### SHADOWS FROM THE ALBUM SKIES

FAIRVIEW PRESS CD

*Cloud*'s Time Machines has long been considered a watershed album as an sonic exploration of dromenology in facilitating temporal displacement in lieu of, or in addition to, their vocational chemical appetite. For many years now, Andrew Chalk has been invoking a similar auricular alchemy, coaxing the most beautiful tonalities from bowed gongs and guitars in projects such as Mirror (with Christophe Heermann and Do) (with Colin Potter and Darren Ito). As Heermann and Chalk have parted ways for the moment, Chalk has re-pressed two extremely limited CD-Rs published through the Mirror imprint Three Poples on a single disc through Chalk's own Fairview

Press. Both pieces complement each other nicely as they both drift through pleasantly dissonant buzzes and elegantly rippled guitar drones. While *Cloud* certainly succeeded in a concocting a mind-altering drug through sound, Chalk may have upstaged them not only in hearing time but also channeling the grandeur of the sublime.

## JODA CLÉMENT

### MOVEMENT + REST

ALUMNI CD

The Minimal bassist/composer Joda Clement works in a mode familiar to contemporary Ambient, minimalist and drone based artists, as he seeks to bridge natural and synthetic sounds through an atmospheric wash of blurred details. Within his debut album *Movement + Rest*, Clement banishes field recordings of broken recorders, trains passing in the night and snow falling within a many soundscapes built from reverb and the sustained vibrations from a couple of synthesizers. While reverb is often employed to give the illusion of space within a recording, Clement effectively flattens each and every one of his sounds into a microcosmic smear. Ghoulish fragments of a melody, a resonator, or a vocal couplet occasionally emerge only to drift back onto more into the shadows. While works such as *Jonathan Calegough* and *Thomas Käner* have succeeded in their inaudible marriage of natural and synthetic sounds, *Movement + Rest* is a tentatively first step that with time might develop into something transcendent.

## FENTON

PUOP CD

After a handful of records under the moniker Shatlie 358, Dan Abrams picked up his acoustic guitar and a new pseudonym. While he's still exploring granular techniques and impressionistic strophes, Abrams's first recording as Fenton purposefully dives into the sentimentality within the introductions and coda of pop songs. It's hard to say what specific pop songs Abrams had in mind, as the precursors have been thoroughly rewritten and obscured; rather, he's working through the syrupy emotionality that's found in any given love ballad. As Abrams cycles through his typically crisp, acoustic guitar riffs, his intentionally never goes anywhere with his songs, defying pop imperatives for bombastic builds and catch choruses. Pop meanders through his own digital fringe and faltering ardence, confident in its references to Eno and Saito.

## HERIBERT FRIEDL

### BRADYCARD

NON VISUAL OBJECTS CD

The multidisciplined Austrian Heribert Friedl began to make a name for himself through numerous international exhibitions in which scents were emphasized as the dominant sensorial experience of his installations, which also include photography, sculpture and sound. Given the accompanying aromas that *Crouton Records* provided for their releases by Keith Berry and The Hafler Trio with Willm De Reider, it's bit disconcerting that Friedl didn't drench this

release on his own Non Visual Objects label with an olfactory finger of some sort. Nonetheless, Friedl has enjoyed some success in the equally liminal field of lower case sound constructions thanks to his ongoing *Improv* collaborations with Bernhard Götter. Friedl's instrument of choice is a Hungarian hammered dulcimer, which he slowly bows and digitally treats as the basis for his expressionist gestures. As many of the dulcimer's sounds are limited in their sonorities and sonorities, his work acquires greater dynamics and a darker character when he accentuates his slow motion resonance with a judicious use of electronics and discreet field recordings.

## MICHAEL GENDREAU

### VITTO

ASCULATURE CD

Earning his keep as an acoustics consultant in San Francisco, Michael Gendreau has refined his sense of listening to an extraordinary level. With the aid of increased sensitivity, accelerometers, Gendreau's tools on mechanical surfaces, resonant frequencies and untamed vibrations that could prove deleterious to architectural structures. His parallel activities as a sound art set see him engage with a conceptual framework that is polarized from the logical pursuits of his day job, while focusing on the same acoustic phenomena. Gendreau's nonentities sounds, which otherwise might be incongruous, fit into what is wholly foreign. On *Vitto*, he articulates this as a state of "soil-sleep." Within the three extended suites of *Vitto*, he uses an exaggerated sense of scale to dominate his source materials. The most successful of the three pieces is found in his transformation of the fissures, while and gashes from pressurized air tanks into ferocious electrostatic exhalations and eerie sonorities. Elsewhere, Gendreau mimics the ethereal crackle from Vito recordings to that of the howling buzz of a couple of wasps; finally, he infuses the acoustic forms an industrialized space into a grotesque din of piercing timbres.

## THE HAFLER TRIO

### IF TAKE, THEN TAKE

CDP"

Relatively on one hand, obfuscation on the other – this is the art of the Hafler Trio, whose solo technician Andrew McKenzie presents metaphysical research as sound constructs and interrelated within teens. Aesthetically speaking, McKenney has long demonstrated a masterful control over his empathetic sounds that flutter and dance as if driven from elemcy arioso to itself through the self-pralosed tricin, half-tricin and real phenomenon of if/else. Then like, he engineers gnarly gestures of minimalism with a sensibility closer to his earlier work (e.g. *An Utmost*, *Of The Supreme*, *Venitiquist*), and mailed by sudden stops and hammered dips that change the musical direction. In addition to the diffuse miasma of McKenney's compositions, his texts beneath the audience to seek knowledge of the self by deconstructing the biological, spiritual and technological institutions that have infected mankind. Within the oblique exegesis, McKenney

conveys a frustration that his ideals may not be getting through, even though his tech-gnostic slights of hand are intended as conundrums. Not all of us may be enough to sit in the court of the magicks, but at least he lets us hear how magnificient his chorus is.

## JOEL STERN & ANTHONY GUERRA

### OUTDOOR BOWERS

PSEUDO ARCANA CDR

During an extended sojourn in London, the Australian guitar/found object duo of Joel Stern and Anthony Guerra strategies that straddle electroacoustic composition and free noise improvisation. On *Outdoor Bowers*, the two generate a kinetic fury of tactile sounds from various objects scraped across guitar pick-ups and amplified through contact mics. Often mirroring the deliberate non-intentionality of free jazz percussion, these sounds skip, slitter and stumble as one of the distractingly stratified layers found throughout their recordings. Field recordings of chatty birds and muted drums coaxed from the guitar roll in as the other pastoral track layers for *Outdoor Bowers*. At times, these layers are made as to appear entirely uninterested in dialogue with the other sounds, creating a rather noisy sizzle, however, Stern and Guerra generate polyphonic loops and evolving phrases in much the same way that Steve Roden slowly merges his concrete sounds into an elegant harmonic communion.

## ZOVIET \* FRANCE:

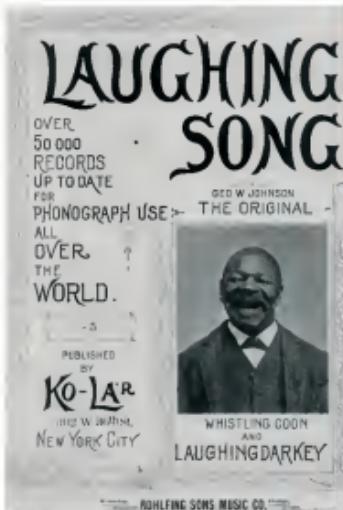
### MUSIC FOR A SPAGHETTI WESTERN

KLANGGALERIE CD

1985 marked the beginning of a very prolific period for *Zoviet \* France*, as the energetic collective of post-Industrial alchemists started recording their four part series entitled *Cham*, *Choc*, *Chocophony*, *Music For A Spaghetti Western*. *Western* was recorded at the same time – however, it remained unreleased until the Austrian label Klanggalerie recently uncovered the tapes. Like the album *McGitt*, *Looney Tunes* And *Spaghetti Circus* from the CSCP series, *Spaghetti Western* overly expresses disgust with through US foreign policy being exaggerated by the senile Ronald Reagan, as *zoviet \* france* incongrue Raiger's voice into sprawling implications that emphasize the ease of his charged political speeches. However, *zoviet \* france* keep their political statements brief and move onto other matters, in particular their hysterical use of tape loops and delay, which appear as the few punk tones of Terry Riley's time lag accumulation, *zoviet \* france* run their signature battery of plinkety-glonking oads, hand percussion, breathy flutes and extended vocalizations through all of these effects, creating arresting results for imagined cultures. Despite a smattering of rough edges and incomplete sketches, *Music For A Spaghetti Western* is a sprawling recording and a very welcome release, given the quantity of *zoviet \* france* material in the past decade. □

# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Left: George W. Johnson, from *Lost Sounds*. Right: Tom Zé's eyeball, from *(Cocaine)*.

## LOST SOUNDS: BLACKS AND THE BIRTH OF THE RECORDING INDUSTRY, 1890-1919

**TIM BROOKS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS, \$34.95 PAPER

BY BRIAN MORTON

Kenna left another stratum under salty Mississippi mud, but even in quiet years the damp and humidity of New Orleans was eating away at parts of the city's rich musical culture. Of the many commercial cylinders made by one of Louisiana's pioneering black recording artists, just one copy of one performance has come into Tim Brooks's hands. Now all but lost under a rumble of surface noise, but safely taped for posterity, it features Louis "Lebo" Vasseur in his after-ego as Bruder Rasmus reciting the mock sermon "Adam And Eve And De Winter Apple". The delivery is radically different from the grossly caricatured blackface delivery of white performers. Vasseur speaks naturally and without eyerolling exaggeration. It is a voice from a vanishing past.

*Lost Sounds* is not an incredibly detailed history of the pre-1920s black recording. It is also an urgent clarion call for the preservation of a fragile heritage. Careless handling, time, chance and neglect have all conspired to erode the work of early black artists. What little is left can be sampled on a double CD set from Arachne/Reedition and it makes for remarkable listening.

This early history of sound recording is fairly well known, not least the low priority given to music on Thomas Alva Edison's famous ten point list of potential uses for the new technology. There were practical reasons for this, of course. Early equipment required quiet instruments like piano rather than noisy bass, charts and hollers, and the almost lost art of whetting. Early the most famous of the artists Brooks covers is George W. Johnson, creator of "The Whistling Coon" and "The Laughing Song" (later recorded by British comedian Charlie Pusey as "The Laughing Policeman"). Johnson's life is an object lesson in the paradoxes of black-white relations at the turn of the 20th century; his afterlife is also a salutary reminder that history itself is as woefully pliable and as vulnerable to distortion as those early cylinders.

Most people know of Johnson from Fred Gaisberg's 1942 book *We Music Goes Round*. It offers a vivid snapshot of a "magic Negro" whose "tame and riches [came from] just two titles", but who died badly, "hanged for throwing his wife out of a window when in a drunken frenzy". Great story, but untrue. Johnson and his common-law wife Roslyn Sharp lived in a New York basement for a start. He was also acquitted of her death, after a bizarrely mismanaged prosecution in which he was afforded a surprising level of white middle class support.

What's more, fame he may have had, but Gaisberg's "fictions" are wishful thinking. Johnson

was paid a flat fee for recordings (albeit many times since cylinders couldn't be readily copied like later shellac discs) and made nothing more, no matter how successful a recording was in the phonograph booths or at fairs.

Johnson died in 1914. The first jazz recordings weren't made until three years later, and everyone knows the paradox of that: the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was all-white, just as Johnson is the only black face in a group photograph of early recording artists and technicians taken on Edison's estate in 1900. Brooks can't establish with certainty that he was the first black artist to make a cylinder but between the emergence of the "Whistling Coon & Laughing Darkey" and The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, he has tracked down the stories of some 40 audio pioneers, names mostly more familiar as he moves from The Unique Quartette and Vassie to WC Handy, Bert Williams, Eddie Blake and even leading champion Jack Johnson, whose impeccably caricatured descriptions of pugilists won was a double gold to white racists who had not only seen their man beaten but by someone more articulate than themselves. Miles Davis may have given him iconic status with a non-bowing audience, but Johnson was a towering star in his own right.

Gaisberg rightly described George Johnson's voice as "low-pitched and fruity like a cantaloupe". The first real African-American cantaloupe is recorded, again as far as Brooks can determine, was Dick Lapey who in December 1910 joined banjoist Carroll Clark in Columbia's New York studio to put down the hymn "I Surrender All". Significantly, she didn't even take a solo line.

Brooks has built substantially on the earlier work of scholars like Ann Charters, Robert Dixon and John Godrich, Tim Grayck and a host of daddied discographers. His research is impeccable, his conclusions quiet and unforced. Dick Spottswood's appendix on Caribbean and South American recordings adds an important dimension.

Interestingly, the name that hovers, mostly unspoken, over *Lost Sounds* is that of Buddy Bolden, who ironically came into his prime after the Louisiana Phonograph Company began winding down. In 1919, his tenorine player Willy Cornish said that Boldy had made a record for a "white company". That must have been before 1908, before Cornish went off to serve in Cuba, and it was apparently a march rather than a blues.

Even so, it remains the Holy Grail of jazz recording. Wrongly so, assume it did exist, and it becomes a warning about how precarious a legacy the first black recording artists left behind – if jazz's primal Adam could be coopted so easily to oblivion, how much easier for his successors, all those Coons and Abels, Japeths, Hems and Noahs to disappear in the floods of time. For some of them, this discographical Ark has probably come too late. □



## ¡COCOANDO!: 50 YEARS OF LATIN ALBUM COVER ART

PABLO YGLESIAS

PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS/PBK £19.95

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

During the past 20 years, anthologies of record packaging have appeared in droves. Some purport to survey the most memorable imagery of various eras, as with the *Hipgnosis Album Cover Albums* – which began the trend of rock-oriented coffee table books – or Michael Ochs's *2000 Record Covers*. Of late, *Cover Art*, collections have shaped their focus: picture sleeves for punk 45s, vintage *Rock & Weston*, funk and exotic covers, and even *Radical Album Cover Art*. Part 3, which appears to be aimed exclusively at fine readers, perhaps this flurry of interest in the visual marketing of recorded music reflects the tacit acknowledgement that record covers have come full circle, from the spartan paper jackets of 78 rpm discs through the roccoco excesses of

70s gatefold covers, to the diminished canons of CD booklets.

¡Cococando! trumps the majority of album art collectors on several levels, conveying cultural data, pocket histories of musical sub-genres and why harru. Political thought has always run close to the surface in any field of entertainment aimed at a Latin audience, and so Pablo Yglesias's notes are informed by the reality of ghettoised mariachis struggling for recognition in a marketplace largely shaped by the preferences and financial hegemony of white families. His review of Latin music is all-encompassing, one sense sees off offences for – and intimate knowledge of – Cuban records of the 50s, Latin soul and boogaloo from the 60s, post-psychadelic crossover mariachi, and the albums sanctioned or banished by the governments of Cuba or Brazil.

With a mind to crossover appeal, Latin cover art often paralleled the look of contemporary rock album covers (the artist costumed as film

star, outlaw or shaman, indicating the apex of art director's influence throughout the 70s); others reflected the deep rooted religious beliefs unique to the Latin audience, as with the numerous covers alluding to the *Sentencia* faith and *felones* motifs. The theme of rebellion is a dominant strain throughout, the sepa-anted girl of Joe Cuba's *Buster Out*, the Fania label's cover for Willie Colón's *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* referencing obligatory roughnecks western imagery, and the Africanist visuals favoured by Manu Chao all address the cultural confinement felt by Latinos in the music business. None of these, however, puts so subtle a spin on telling the story that he does the sleeve art for Zé's 1973 album, *Todos Os Olhos (All Of The Eyes)*. Set side by side with the reptilian old guard Angé Barrios's, Diana Crocodilo, Zé's cover on first glance seems to feature all the more cynical photography, the noise muddles this soft focus image as a marble nestled in a woman's ass. Zé remains unrepentant, urging

his cover model ("even if she has grandchildren") to come forward; Zé, even the *trapocaté* rebel, daftness his record cover, "which could be morally doubtful, today is even patriotic".

Most album cover books wear the era of the music's initial release literally on their sleeves, with remastered LPs sporting pinstripe or cut corners, the inadvertent circular浩劫 caused by years of *HiFi*, revealing the shape of the disc within. In contrast, the sleeves collected in ¡Cococando! appear to have eluded the ravages of time, each one sitting flawlessly on the page. This is probably testament both to careful photo-shoot technique and the author's suspicious calling of the best archives. The *venustis* at the core of Yglesias's history of record packaging glow in saturated colours, well matched by his writing, incidentally the risks employed in these reproduction emit a seductive aroma resulting in silkscreened posters from the psychadelic era, and adding Postman's value to this absorbing tome. □

## OTHER PLANETS: THE MUSIC OF KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN

ROBIN MACONIE

SCARBCROW PRSSB PBK £25

BY PHILIP CLARK

The New Zealand composer and music journalist Robin Macauley has probably written more published essays on Karlheinz Stockhausen than any other writer. His *Notes Of Stockhausen* was published in 1976, with an update and a book of conversations (*Stockhausen On Music*) appearing in the late 1980s, and such dogged dedication to his cause is both a strength and a weakness. Although they have apparently had ups and downs, Macauley has gained sufficient trust for Stockhausen to talk relatively openly – even though bending the great man's ears comes at a cost.

Although the notorious incident when Stockhausen mouthed off about the events of

11 September is in itself titillating tit-tattle, Macauley lacks the objectivity and the will to explore what the implications might be for Stockhausen's grasp on reality, and invention of it is buried in a single sentence near the opening. His adulation, too, feels uneasily cultish – Macauley has a habit of disintegrating into sub-Lenin Hubbard harmonies. "A moment in the history of the Big Bang where the expansion of the local universe has reached its maximum and the maximal configuration of the instruments has stabilized to a point where intergalactic communication is possible" is his too-curing description of Stockhausen's *Lichter-Wasser*.

It's in the interest of cuts – and their leaders – to keep analysis at arm's length, and Macauley writing this like by posing soon on musical analysis. The back cover contains the rather gauche line "Macauley wisely avoids technical analysis" (wee by whose definition?),

and Macauley further rationalizes his approach in an introduction entitled "Telling The Truth". Arnold Schoenberg's famous letter to wretched Rolf Kolisch, in which the composer argues against the value of note-for-note analysis, ("I have always been dead against, seeing how it is done; whereas I have always helped people to see, what it is") is cited, but Schoenberg's rarely did I mind his words to give license to Big Bang psycho-bolide.

This is a pity because Macauley is also perceptive. His description of musical notation as "a 'map', with pitch as latitude and time as longitude" becomes a telling springboard for his discussion of how Stockhausen emerged on this principle for *Plus-Minus* (1963), a score in which performers interpret schemata of symbols and data before they play. "The complexity of *Plus-Minus* is part of the composer's message; serial music is hard work" Macauley writes as a route into his discussion of how *Plus-Minus*

exemplifies "the model and spirit of traditional German educational philosophy". References to William Blake, Mahenroth's *Life Of Snakes*, Jerry, Huxley and Claude Lévi-Strauss race past, but although endlessly interesting, they become an empty indulgence because the musical processes themselves have been relegated to the sideline.

The book proceeds thus, perched between scholarship and spurious doctrine. There is indeed something supercilious about early and middle-period masterpiece like *Gruppen* and *Hymnen*, and when the music fits the telling Macauley is on song ground. But as he approaches Stockhausen's recent output, especially the desperately inconsistent and often damned *Licht* cycle of operas, he becomes increasingly implausible. Moreover, the suspicion that Stockhausen himself is a Machiavellian shadow in the background might be unbrushed but is difficult to avoid. □

## THE TROUBLE WITH MUSIC

MAT CALLAHAN

AK PRESS PBK £10

BY DAVID STUBBS

Reading San Francisco veteran musician/producer Mat Callahan's *Imposters*, despairing, ambivalent survey of the state and role of music today, one finds himself in the grip of contradictory emotions. As he invokes the heavyweights of yesterday – Marc, Anil, Mata, Walter Benjamin, George Clinton – in his rage against the burgeoning forces of corporatism, which have stolen, by stealth, the "people's" music from them and then sold it back to them in a bloodless, boneless version, a deliberately dissonant "anti-music" under the rubel of the so-called "popular", you share his fiery indignation. However, when he speculates vaguely on what a true music of the proletariat might sound like, earthy, joyful and springing from the abundant wellspring of working class

decoency, then glance back at the introduction which is permeated by soft from Chomskyan, you very much hope that anything remotely like Chumbawumba is not what he's in mind.

His assertion that the blues/gospel dichotomy of African-American music is the key to its greatness and its validity, in that both the sacred and the profane, God and the Devil have their vital role to play in a popular music that reflects the authentic (and neglected) human spirit. But then, there are times when, coming as it does from a vaguely Marxist perspective, you wonder if Callahan is motivated ultimately not by anger or despair but by a fatally oil-lashed optimism about the performativity of the human condition, one that has no chance of being implemented except with tragic consequences.

And call it cynicism, but when he addresses today's generation of downloaders directly, as if they are present and attending to the text, to

download for free, by all means, but make some sort of compensatory donation to worthy "migrants" causes, you feel like it's the treddy wendy trying to play a helpful if weary youths to take advantage of the hotbox boy in the corner. There are other irritations along the way, as excessive use of exclamation marks! Also, critics are clearly dismissed on mass as either "dancing about a architectural" chestnut and as mere consumer guides, lacking Callahan's moral gladness as to their true purpose. Moreover, the author's assertion that John Lennon's "Working Class Hero" represents the regressed rage of working class people the world over, lacks suffice to say the least.

Yet for all this, the more you read, the more you're infected and even persuaded by Callahan's pose. His addressing the very basic concerns of the production and consumption of music, historically and socially, breaking these down to their absolutely primary components.

He's quite right, too, in asserting that the state of popular music speaks a great deal about the state of mankind, something the ancient Greeks recognised but which we've even today, many otherwise intelligent people are oblivious. His frame of historical reference is immense and judicious, especially when he methodically expounds the faves in the thinking of post-war musical thinkers Theodore Adorno and Charles Seeger – the latter daringly mixing up "cultural workers" with agricultural workers in his anti-technological stance.

Finally, Callahan concludes on a note of optimism. He cites figures showing that sales of recorded music are going down, but – he has, who gives a damn? – for gains of financial instruments are going up. Could it be that, faced with the systematic substitution of popular culture perpetrated by the corporations, that people are slowly beginning to take back the means of production into their own hands? □

# Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Rolf Julius explains why sound and vision are simply opposite sides of the same coin. By Rahma Khazam



Rolf Julius (left) and his sculptures, *Brazi* (2008), *Music For The Eyes* (1982/2004) and *Why Pink* (2001)

"The surface of a sound interests me," Rolf Julius once wrote. "Is it round or angled? Raw or smooth? I'm also interested in the distance of a sound. Does it sound different closer than further away. And if you bend down to pick up a sound...?"

These are questions that go to the heart of Rolf Julius's work. "I even made a piece where you lay on your back and put speakers on your eyes, so you could look into the sound," reminisces the Berlin-based sound artist, sitting amid the hubbub of a noisy Paris cafe. For the past 30 years, Julius's minimal pieces, which have made him one of the leading exponents of contemporary sound art, have been teasing out connections between sound and visuals. Take the pieces he is currently showing at Paris's Galerie Iris Van Herpen, a longtime supporter of his work. The lid on Japanese soup cup opens up to reveal a speaker covered with powdery black pigment. Muffled gurgles escape from the cup as the pigment twists and contours, making the sounds visible. A little way away, two small stones topped with tiny speakers are engaged in a muted dialogue. Meanwhile, by the window, soft chirps issue forth from a speaker attached to a bowl of water, breathing life into the image of rippling water on the video screen close by. As Julius comments: "Water in a bowl, a speaker, sound: what is it? Nothing. But when you put them together in a special way, then all of a sudden, if you're lucky, it's a piece – it's as if it's living its own life."

Julius discovered his passion for sound and visuals the very first time he used them together. Born in the German port city of Wilhelmshaven in 1939, he studied visual art in Bremen and Berlin. It was not until the mid-70s that he began using sound, while working as a photographer in Bremen. He invited

members of the public to enter a booth one by one and bare their backs, which he then photographed. "People were very nervous, so I put on some music, pieces by Robert Ashley and Pauline Oliveros, and they liked it so much that they relaxed," he recalls. "It was something different and they [realised] it was art. From that moment, I became aware that music or sound could change situations."

Towards the end of the 70s, Julius moved to Berlin, where he discovered the budding sound art scene. "I was very impressed by it," he says. "I also wanted to create music [for my pieces], but I couldn't because I did not know how to compose. So I started with one note." Julius is referring to that first note he made by striking a piece of iron with an iron bar and recording the resulting sound. He then copied it onto a lower grade tape, obtaining a slightly different sound. He had taken photos of a dyke and decided to combine his two sounds with the photographs. Each photo showed the slight curve of the dyke against the horizon, taken from a slightly different angle. "I had a line of six photos and I put a speaker at either end," he explains. "Then all of a sudden the small curves started to move up and down, they began to dance!" He showed this work, titled *Dike Line* (1979), to art activist and curator René Block, who immediately invited him to take part in his forthcoming show in West Berlin's Akademie der Künste. The year was 1980 and the occasion was the mythical show *Für Augen Und Ohren*, which brought together works by the likes of Laurie Anderson, John Cage, Luigi Russolo, Nam June Paik and Bill Fontaine for the first major exhibition on sound and the visual arts yet to be held in Europe. It was also around that time that Julius launched a concert series comprising such memorable pieces as *Concert For A Frozen Lake*

(1982), in which recorded piano sounds were played on the edge of an ice-cup lake. He used the same method as *Dike Line*, although in this case the recordings bore little resemblance to the original sound, due to the quality of the tapes. "This music was more like a vibraphone than a piano. It was perfect for a frozen lake because it evoked the material of ice," he observes. Soon after the Berlin concerts, Julius moved to New York on a grant and was allocated a studio at PS1. His career took off as he gradually began giving performances and creating installations throughout Europe, Japan and the United States.

In the meantime, Julius was pursuing his experiments. *Music For The Eyes* (1984), in which the viewer placed small speakers over his eyes, demonstrated that, in the absence of any visual input, listening becomes a physical experience involving the entire body. Another important discovery occurred when he was working on the idea of having sound come from the inside of a stone. "I wanted to put sounds into a big stone by making a hole in it, but it was too complicated," Julius says. "Then I discovered that when I placed a speaker on top of a stone, the sound appeared to be coming from inside it." Getting stones to talk was also a way of drawing attention to his materials and their intrinsic properties, which is another abiding theme in Julius's work.

He was likewise developing a better understanding of the relations between sound and visuals. "If you go from one medium to another, there has to be a link," he insists. For Julius, a sound goes with an object when it reflects the object's surface and texture. "If I combine a normal clear piano sound with a dirty red pigment, it will strike you as odd," he remarks. "This is the kind of experience a sound artist acquires because he knows about the texture of sounds. A composer



would not work this way. He doesn't know about the texture, or what I would call the surface of the sound."

Although Julius's work is often spoken about in terms of synaesthesia, he takes exception to the tendency. It is the combined effect of sound and visuals that interests him. "In my work," he says, "you concentrate on both the visual and the acoustic elements and, taken together, they result in something new."

The soundworld that Julius uses is highly specific. Utilising processed natural and instrumental sounds as well as simple devices such as buzzers, he produces what he calls "small sounds". These soft, yet compelling, murmurs or hums retain a natural feel and are often suggestive of frogs, crickets or birds. "My artificial sounds are sometimes more natural than natural sounds because there is a relationship to nature. Crickets, for instance, do not sing with their mouths, but move their legs; a buzzer does the same, it's mechanical," Julius points out. Most important however, are the pauses between his sounds, which orchestrate the viewer's experience of the piece. "Say you have a piece consisting of red and black pigments," he explains. "You play a sound, then the pause is too long, so you look at the red and black. Then you play another sound, then you look, and so on."

In *Big Gray* (1994), sound is conducive to concentration and stillness. This piece was created for a building situated in one of the noisiest streets in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Rather than fight against the ambient din by raising the volume of his piece, Julius went one better: when the viewer concentrated on the sounds, he became oblivious to the noise outside. "I found that my senses relaxed and I was able to listen to the entire composition without paying attention to what was going on elsewhere," he says. The notions

of concentration and stillness crop up in many of Julius's works. The calm, meditative atmosphere emanating from his pieces stems from the hypnotic intensity of his soft whirs, which hold the viewer's attention. Creating stillness by means of sound is a notion that harks back to John Cage, for whom stillness, or silence, necessarily comprised of sound of some kind. It likewise stems from Julius's experiences in Japan – a country that immediately took to his work and with which he has many natural affinities. "Japan helped me to understand silence," he says. "You go to a Zen temple, and you can understand something about it."

The Zen-like detachment and simplicity that run through Julius's work mark him out from the majority of contemporary sound artists. He has a close affinity with Japanese artist Aiko Suzuki, whose work likewise references nature, while displaying a similar freshness and economy of means. He also feels a proximity to Morton Feldman, whose pared down aesthetic is mirrored in the minute differences between the six photos constituting *Dike Line*. Even more important, however, is John Cage, whose conception of silence and openness to all sounds were a liberating influence. Yet Julius has always kept his distance from Cage. "It's very difficult to become an independent artist when you are close to a figure like John Cage," he says. "Most artists connected to him could not move by themselves. They were always saying, 'John said I did a good piece.' In my case, [Takemasa] Kosugi knew him very well and told me stories about him. But I was too shy to talk to him and I am happy I only watched from a distance."

Julius's forthcoming projects testify to his continued independence and creativity. He will be showing some of his video images in Berlin in November, while next year's *MärzMusik* will feature pianist Aki

Takahashi performing one of his graphic scores. This is by no means his first attempt at composing for others. Vocal ensemble der maulwerker presented a memorable performance of a series of graphic scores titled *Songbooks 1-6* in Cologne in July 2004. Meanwhile, Julius is preparing for a major show in Bochum next April, which will probably include a symposium and contributions from like-minded artists and friends, ranging from Aiko Suzuki, Takemasa Kosugi, Mira Yu and the dancer Junko Wada, to John Cage and Kasimir Malevitch.

Julius may have been at the forefront of the nascent German sound art scene in the 1980s, along with the likes of Christina Kubisch and Hans Peter Kuhn, yet he remains modest about his achievements. "I was like a kid next to people like Kosugi and David Tudor," he says. It is not for nothing that Julius considers Kosugi and Tudor as precursors. They may not be sound artists as such, but David Tudor's *Rawfinest*, for instance, broke new ground in the 70s in terms of its sound sources and their placement in space. As for the new generation of sound artists, they are not as obsessed with sound as the artists of Julius's generation, who had to contend with the resistance of the art and music establishment, not to speak of the public. "[Today's sound artist]s are more open," he concludes. "They don't care whether they are working with sound or visuals; they mix everything. Thanks to the people who came before, they have realised that sound is not such a big deal – it's just a material like any other." □ *West Music* is at the Galerie Les Vingts, Paris, until 5 November. Red Julius will be taking part in *Playing John Cage*, a group show at the Arnolfini, Bristol, from 5 November until 25 January 2006, and *Kettle's Yard*, Cambridge, 28 January until 2 April 2006.



Left: Paul Panhuysen (stabbing the wires). Right: More time for The Minutemen

## STEVE RODEN + PAUL PANHUYSEN LONDON SERPENTINE GALLERY PAVILION

BY JULIAN CONWAY

The year's Serpentine Gallery summer pavilion in Hyde Park was designed by Portuguese architects Iena Soa and Eduardo Souto De Moura, and it has the air of a gigantic tarp that has lumbered across from the neighbouring lake. Its translucent polycarbonate canopy slopes about four feet above the ground and its therefore not ideal for an evening concert venue in England on the day after the autumnal equinox. The organisers have accordingly fitted heaters to ward off the chill as night fell. It's part of the agenda of the annual Pavilion series that these built structures should be physically experienced as such, so it was inspired programming to commission the long overdue London debut of Paul Panhuysen, a Dutch sound artist whose work has for many years engaged intriguingly with the acoustic properties of architectural space.

First, though, Steve Roden, from Los Angeles, presented a piece compiled from sounds gathered from the site, some sent to him over the course of the preceding three months. As Roden sat an inordinately channelling his half-hear composition through speakers, there was plenty of opportunity for the audience to look around and take in features of the environment. The piece was characteristically gentle, episodic in shadings and curiously elusive: traffic noise swept in beneath the building's shell, a continuous wash lapping around Roden's sounds. His creaks started to resemble the stave of rowing oars – the pavilion cast as upturned boat. A lengthy harmonica arpeggio took on evocable analogue series – modular rectangles of the structure suggesting blooming holes of a gigantic mouth organ. A sequence involved toy glockenspiels, played live and name – the pavilion became a musical box. In California the instructions may have heightened the experience, in London in autumn they fell disappointingly flat.

Chairs were tamed to face the opposite end of the structure. Panhuysen looked owl-like as he made his way to the long strings he had fixed

there. He activated the installation with tensed hands, arms raised like a sleepwalker slowly peeling the breads of the pavilion, turning and slowly peeling back. And so on. For some while. Generating edgy tones, brief dissonances and occasional haloes of overture glow. Sometimes Panhuysen turned to face the audience, his whitened hands meeting with a conductor's gestures. The ingredients for a special occasion were in place but somehow they never coalesced. The piece ended; a sizeable percentage of the audience decamped, assuming their physical experience of the 2005 pavilion had gone to a halt. After a chaotic intermission and with remaining audience members still chattering, Panhuysen, looking suitably perplexed, embarked on a finale. The time the richness of the sound was immediately apparent, the strings fused into a harmonic haze and the promise of the evening came close to being realised. But it's getting late in the year for events that admit the open air and Panhuysen has maybe had to wait too long for that overture invitation.

### SUPERSILENT 7

HOME GHAMMONG DVD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Supersilent are well named, not because silence is much of a component. In their busy, often aqua sound, but because of the silence in which this Norwegian quartet have chosen to enthrall themselves. The 109 minute

Supersilent 7, a document of a live recording they made at Parkteatret, Oslo in August 2004, comes as a similar treat to its predecessors. Its elegant typeface confining itself to a few minor technical credits but offering nothing in the way of illustrations, song titles, group member details or playing credits. One is forced to confront this monolithic music without the grip of context – it won't come to you.

Odd, then, that they should have chosen to make a DVD at all – furthermore, that it should be a dual disc dslr, enhancing the picture quality, since Supersilent are deliberately obscured in a grainy, black and white darkness, their hall H1 features like flickering sprites as they play. But why have any sort of visual destruction, be it keyboardist Stale Storlakken's mattockchip whackers, or the manicistic demis-



presence of Helge Sven, aka Deathprod, responsible for "audio virus"?

The advantage is that one at least gets to witness the physical interaction undertaken by Supersilent, without there being the remotest danger of their leaping into the spectacular posturing of would be icons. And play they do, as effectively as anyone in the world right now, accessible yet challenging, luxuriant yet austere, peeling a ardently and neglected as man's link between jazz and rock improvisation. Characteristically, they start sweetly, meditatively, with trumpeter Arve Henriksen blowing muted, mazzone plumes into the air as Storlakken, piano and drummer Jørn Vespestad patter meaningfully about, before the skein begin to darken and the octony neighbours, as it were approaching a war zone. As The Wire's Rob Young once noted, their music is prone to moments of catastrophe of the bite sort, of sheer, exhilarating prelude and precipitation. And, while Supersilent do repeat some of their toccas over the full stretch (Proggish keyboard extractions, sampled voices like transmissions from the frontlines) suggesting their bag of tricks is not bottomless, they sound like a group who are many decades from growing weary or tame.

### WE JAM ECONO: THE STORY OF THE MINUTEMEN

MIKE IRWIN (DIRECTOR) 2006 86 MIN

BY ANDREW MCKEE

This documentary film starts in the 1970s with two creative working class 13 year olds, D Boon and Mike Watt, meeting in Park Peak in San Pedro, California. More accurately, the former fell out of a tree and landed on the latter. They became best friends, sharing a love of history and groups like The Blue Öyster Cult and Creedence Clearwater Revival. Restless to express themselves, they started playing music together. This activity yielded the Bright Orange Band, The Reactions and culminated in The Minutemen, who from 1979-85 produced some of the most original rock music of the period. What makes their collaboration so extraordinary is that they did't really know what they were doing. More precisely they didn't know what they weren't supposed to do. For example, both friends were guitarists after a

fection, but D Boon's mother insisted her son played guitar in the group. (Boon's mother also played her part in the story, as a regular attendee of the group's early shows.) Watt then went off to buy a bass, thinking it was just a guitar with four strings, and embarrassed himself in the guitar shop by marvelling aloud at this huge instrument he'd been given to try out. When they first started playing, they didn't even realise they were supposed to tune up to each other.

Watt became influenced by funk bass players simply because they were the most easily heard. He and D Boon soon embraced music by The Pop Group and Captain Beefheart and created an original musical vocabulary whose angular forms were helped into shape by drummer George Hurley, a formidable, technically advanced and idiosyncratic player. Boon's hedging, vocals, meanwhile, were allied to frenetic, treble chord work. Their strange chemistry can be seen in action on some tremendous live footage from the early 80s, where the stage front slammers appear nonplussed by these idly, acoustic songs, some of which lasted around 30 seconds.

Director Tim Irwin conducted dozens of interviews with musicians, writers, friends and associates – including Greg Ginn, Nels Cline, Henry Rollins, artist Raymond Pettibon and Flea from The Red Hot Chili Peppers – and deftly edits their testimonies to punctuate the story. But most illuminating are those with the group from 1983 – shortly before D Boon died in a car crash – and with the two surviving group members.

This film was obviously made with a lot of love, but not a whiff of sentimentality. Irwin is particularly successful in evoking an era, recent in time, but culturally remote now, when kids realised they had been swindled by stadium rock for too long and could actually take control of their own musical destiny. The Minutemen's crazy dears are summed up by their recording of their 1984 album, Double Nickels On The Dime. They had already recorded two sides off on hearing that 500 labelmates Husker Du had made a double album Zoo Arcade, they wrote, rehearsed and recorded 20 more songs in a fortnight. As Mike Watt says today, "Nothing about us seemed easily understood". □

# The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Jonny Trunk



## ALESSANDRO ALESSANDRINI & VARIOUS ARTISTS INTERMEZZI JAZZ 04 A

SR JAZZ SERIES CIRCA 1969  
ART DIRECTOR UNKNOWN

I shall always remember my first SR LP sighting. It was almost as hard hitting as the flat SR sound I heard. SR, aka Serrà, was a small and experimental label started by Alessandro Alessandrini, Enrico Momcane's whistler,

guitarist, singer and choir master. The Italian label's output was small, sporadic and musically just for use in film and TV in short, this is high class Italian literary music.

Everything about the sleeve graphics, from the spiky SR logo on the top right to the spinning white 'record' lines, still make my eyes go funny. And I'm always charmed by the 'needle' to record' imagery focused at the heart of the sleeve. It's also a very basic, inexpensive sleeve to produce as it's just a long, printed

card folded in half and only reproduced in two colours.

For me, I see a strange code here – the words, numbers, lines and letters all combine in an accented, but brilliant, way to say something very groovy, although in a foreign tongue that I don't quite understand. Maybe it's linking on science or sound, maybe it's the two combined – but either way, I am intrigued beyond belief. And remember, it's a library sleeve, so it's not for commercial usage, not

for the public's consumption and never meant for sale.

Library LPs have a graphic tone and language all their own, which is what attracts me to them, and is the reason behind a new book I've been working on. And to me this particular sleeve is a perfect example of the genre, a different art from a secret and weird musical world. □ The Music Library, conceived and compiled by Jonny Trunk, is published by Fuel this month. [www.fuel-design.com](http://www.fuel-design.com)

## Go To:



For appetites whetted by Alan Cumming's incisive account of the genesis of Japan's free music scene (see page 30), there are some tasty morsels out there. [Katsu Abe](http://www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm) ([www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm](http://www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm)) is well served on this site – its English-language encyclography is a thorough one – even though the bulk of the pages here are in Japanese. [Masayuki Takayasu](#) ([http://www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm](#)) is a better deal, at least as far as non-Japanese readers are involved. The first is a hugely valuable site containing a chronology, detailed lists of his concerts and writings, plus some information about recent showings of *Takayasu* videos, the second a detailed *discography* ([www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm#discography](http://www.yuji.merip.com/~takayasu/uk.htm#discography), [e.htm](#)). [PSF Records](#), the label so important in the history of Japanese free jazz live recordings, offers a well constructed and user-friendly site – its thumbnail descriptions of the various albums are pretty helpful, too – for collectors

([www.psfrecords.com](http://www.psfrecords.com)). For those wanting more on the history of the Japanese jazz coffee shops, there are a couple of good places to go in the absence of a time-machine ([www.japanfm.wix.com/yesterdaysjazzcoffee.html](http://www.japanfm.wix.com/yesterdaysjazzcoffee.html), [www.digigogo.com/47LabNARU.htm](http://www.digigogo.com/47LabNARU.htm)), the visual element ([www.musubi.jp/library/muse/cyamurasu/cyamurasu.html](http://www.musubi.jp/library/muse/cyamurasu/cyamurasu.html)) is represented by this exhibition of poster art from the avant-garde theater troupes of the 1960s and 70s.

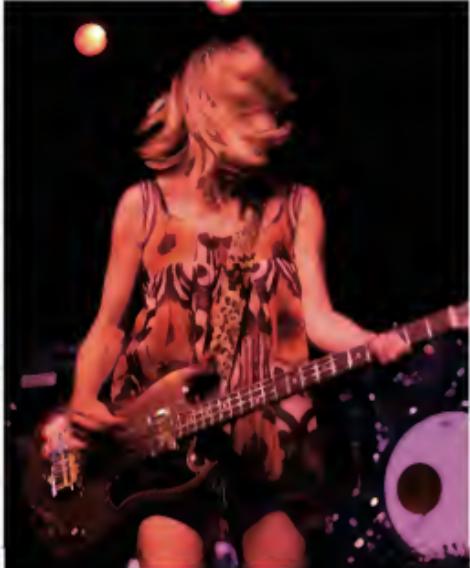
For lovers of Balinese music even with only ever so subtle Christmas presents for musical relatives, lessons in Indonesian dance and music, and, indeed, a gazillion of your very own can be had ([www.goindochi.com](http://www.goindochi.com)) with relative ease from the *Yogasan Pelessendi* centre. No sponges for restating the [UnoWeb Foundation](#) ([www.unoweb.com](http://www.unoweb.com)), who have recently launched their radio station. It is now a 24-hour MP3 stream, containing files randomly chosen from their massive archive. Exploring

the intersection between contemporary visual art, music and performance, [UnoWeb](#) is a trove of interviews, video clips and the unusual – the spoken performances of Hauke Kausch, chief among them. Its recent addition is like a wish list for well, people like us (and it includes, naturally, the complete recordings of *People Like Us*). Alongside the Morton Feldman archive recordings and some new realisations of John Cage works, there's a gem of Rolling Stones recordings in *Nick Jagger's Invocation Of My Demise Brother*. Dating from 1969, the 11 minutes of Moog synthesiser solos were recorded as a soundtrack for Kenneth Anger's film of the same name. The film's dishevelled history (it came about when footage for Anger's *Lucifer Rising* was stolen in 1967 by a Manson gang member) is well documented here, and one senses that Jagger's rhythmic, Moog-ode-like loops might actually mean something. Up.

LOUISE GRAY

# On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



## ARTHURFEST LOS ANGELES BARNSDALL ART PARK

BY JIRON COLEY

Arthur is a free, bi-monthly culture newspaper out of Los Angeles. In the interest of open disclosure, it's worth mentioning that Thurston Moore and I write a column for it. But this isn't about that. This review is about a two day festival that was assembled by the paper's staff. We had no input at all, but if we had been able to make suggestions, it's hard to see how they couldn't have added much to what was a truly boozey event.

The setting was the first, Bonsai Art Park is on a hill overlooking Hollywood and Los Angeles. It's a shockingly pleasant and verdant spot, containing a fine Frank Lloyd Wright building, some municipal-style architecture and a large open field. This allowed the festival to run three events simultaneously throughout the two days. There was a big outdoor stage with decent sight lines and so-so sound. There was a 275 seat theatre for the louder groups not on the main stage and a smaller outdoor stage set-up to accommodate the quieter artists.

The line-up was the second pic. Yoko Ono the second,

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Olivia Tronco Control, Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, Yoko Ono at Arthurfest, Smegma and Bill Nenai at Wooden Octopus

and the roster was a pretty good selection of stuff plucked from all across the underground rock/velv/ugly/whats map. Many of the artists had been championed in Arthur at one time or another, but there were also a few that were pretty goddamn obscure. And some of these were among the best.

My 15 year old son's pick was Australia's Wallmather, a kind of thug-rock tho visually reminiscent of the Hammermark Coniles. Their music was moshed ass-heavy Sub-dug, but they pulled off with more grace than your dad to expect and better setburns than any of us deserve. They may have actually been the most interesting new group on the main stage that first day. Which is not meant to disparage the raw sport of The Black Keys (although to them I say, "less Beatles, more Bambara"), the very expansive doom action of Sunburned Horn Of The Moon, or the speaker-sold hits of Youth, Sonc. But you knew that stuff already.

On the smaller outdoor stage sensibly the wended thing the first day was Neko Case's set, which reminded me of a Selly Eddy concert performed by a mannequin — squatly operatic excursions of lurch and lurch, which were simultaneously hypnotic and squirm-inducing. But DCS also added many esses as people began to wonder into the place and Josephine Foster's half-walk thing was as charming as T-Model Ford's electric-munch-bliss thing was basic, yet fitting.

There was real sweet stuff happening in the

theatre too, but usually it was only possible to jam a head in the backdoor to essay the scene, because the line in the front was so long. Still, Residual Echoes sounded almost as spasmodic as The Magik Markers although not as Kraut as Circle or as glistening as Six Degas Of Admiration, who were a lot damn than Medow, who shredded laps from here to Memphis. What a wonderful mix of stuff!

The second day, the theatre was even harder to get into, especially when Earth, Browning and Sun O))) were playing back to back. But the ragged flow of these was truly only soulished by the sometimes erratic sound system and the onstage appearance of poet Charles Potts, who was blown physically across the stage by wind from the speakers.

Outside on the small stage, the best set may have been by guitarist Jack Rose, whose fingerpicking technique has really become astounding. But the lads seemed to especially dig back to back sets featuring Deverenda Bantart, first as a member of Veltner's communevolk moon unit, then as the leader of his new group, Harry Rose, who rolled out in a mid-period Tim Rose sort of way. Who'd have imagined such a thing? Not Chaz Marshall, who kept her beer and piano and apocrypha sluttering in rhythm, like a true acolyte of Michael Hurley.

The Monday big stage featured stuff like a reformed Chile Tronco Control (who still seem to understand the dynamics of pop napkin construction as well as anyone) and Comets On

Fire (who have become as flagrantly over the top as Stacie Waedy). But most people were willing for Yoko Ono to show up and explain exactly how they were supposed to use those little flashlights with her name on them.

Last time I actually saw Ono was a guest spot she did some 35 years ago. In the meantime, I once wanted to see if she would call on the phone that was installed at her retrospective art show a few years ago in NYC. But she did not ring. So it had been a long time since I heard her voice in person. And it was hot. She cut her way out of some cloth and a dog bag. She showed us how to use those flashlights to beam our support. And she even sang "Don't Worry, Keiko." Her group was actually better sounding than I had dared hope, and the material she played also leaned much further away from the Gelfen ersa than expected. She was a cool as Merle Cunningham and was even tagged in a style that was not unlike something Melech might have worn, so many of us went just about as happy as clams.

And really, what clam wouldn't be happy with such a pan-genre display of teeth? But the more I think about the oddball vok acts that played (Viking Moses, Winter Flowers, Lander Diamond, Marissa Nadler, Brightblack Morning Light), the more I start to think that they were really at the heart of the event. There was a peaceful hippy vibe hugging the contours of the hill, even when Stanley Kravitz was kicking out their all-new jems. And if that means I'm a goddamn hippy, well, so be it. □

## WOODEN OCTOPUS SKULL EXPERIMENTAL MUSICK (PI)FESTIVAL, SEATTLE VARIOUS VENUES USA

BY CHRISTOPHER DELAURENTI

Sprawling across four days, four venues, six concerts and 32 performances, the Wooden Octopus Skull Experimental Musick (Pi)Festival convened at using Seattle's tradition of scrappy, substantive DIY gigs of adventurous music. Indeed, fertile territory awaits anyone willing to exhume the untold history of now forgotten Seattle based organisations and artist collectives of the 1980s, 70s and early 80s, such as New Directions in Music and/or Seaweed Northwest, and NIMUS! Recent efforts, including *The Fire Walking And Decapitation Seminar* (1995), electrohouse (co-organized by this writer in 1997 and 1999) and the annual Seattle Festival Of Improvised Music (1985-present), affirm that a mid-sized city chiefly known as the birthplace of grunge also harbours histories interested in the new and unusual.

The festival started at the Sunset Tavern with Blackburn, who stood behind the mixer to play a short test sound piece of burbling voices that

projected from speaker to speaker much like Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*. Regrettably, this was the only piece of tape music heard during the entire festival. Bellowing and bawling on stage, Anti-Ears' set was scattered, but much of his churning sonic palette — the arrhythmic samples spiced up like the crisp shaves of a moustache, electronic burbles shimmering like antique oil — stood on tape reels and distorted screaming synth tapes — was quite appealing. Keeping their backs to the audience, Noggin, a duo of amped-up violin and electric guitar, hurtled through a ferocious feedback lodee piece as if Thurston Moore had strummed a string quartet by New Complexity honcho Brian Furrerough Cockeying in at under ten minutes, Noggin's incisive song-based performances from Metropolis (think Björk meets Metabow) and The Portland Blue Ensemble, who as their whimsical name suggests, applied contact microphones to spinning bicycle wheels.

Friday was the best night of the festival. Along with stage monitors aimed at the audience, two PA systems operating side by side at the ReBar made earpug megaphone. Against a backdrop of grinding industrial machinery and repurposed recordings of experts discussing

biological hazards, Beaufus doused a gas mask and donned the crowd with white powder and vials of liquid. Also, Gemini's set of fog, strobe, slowed down voices and staggered chunks of distortion stopped suddenly due to some blown fuses. Someone immediately shouted, "You just blasted my fucking soul!" Emil Beaufus stated a series claim to his set proclaimed title of "Greatest Living American Noise Artist" using contact microphones while a sumptuous ground out gales of noise, Beaufus pinned in his underpants, rubbed a contact mixed tape in his hand, his head was and was despondently mopped after offering his CO2.

The Haters, clad in menacing black leather heads, played a single instrument, a Newcastle Solid State record player that spewed colossally loud broadband pulses that eventually coalesced into a quasi rumba groove. The Haters provoked the most intense physiological response — the room felt like a nerdily depressing amateur cabaret. John Wiese (pronounced "weeze", though "wee" would be an apt, albeit incorrect, pronunciation) served up summily gritty noisebombs, pencil-thin line waves yanked from the stratosphere and low tones that palpitated this writer's aorta.

On Saturday, the much anticipated Caroline dangled the crowd with ginch fluorescent costumes reminiscent of transvest trap Tugue. Their well excused thrash rock was fun, but had nothing to do with experimental music. The earlier acts were more adventurous. With two contact mic cables drooping out of his mouth, vampire fangs bared and tethered to a meat, Azam Diloway diagnosed twirling hawks and fuzed out, winning feedback in an arresting set. Then Diloway manned the mixer for Smegma, who veered from surf rock to a forest of horns, trills, and trumpet wahs. This venerable septet also wins the prize for most unusual instrument, a huge dryly litto dental drill.

After days of mega-loud sound, the Sunday set of guitar sashay! Bill Nenai's clear and spiky plucks/thumps was a welcome change. Gapped leads a booth at the Funhouse, Climax Golden Twins, equipped with broken guitars, a straw hat and arched instrument gear, matched Horns' triumphant set with a violent agglomeration of shrieking feedback, tammarine jangles and children's lullabies. The festival concluded at the Baltic Room, set with a bang out with a comfortably atmospheric DJ set from Nurse With Wound mastermind Steven Septién. □

# On Location

## EMOTIONAL ORCHESTRA LONDON TATE MODERN

UK

BY LOUISE GRAY

For anyone unsure as to who, or exactly what, an Emotional Orchestra was, there was an attendant on hand from Tate Modern among the people gathering on the slope of the Turbine Hall. "It's a concert by ladies," he said. And indeed it was that, among other things, Marina Rosenfeld, the Brooklyn-based instigator behind the orchestra, is an artist whose work — a practice that presents itself through both a vessel and a sonic output — is, in a larger sense of the word, performance driven. The Emotional Orchestra for 36 stringed and other bowable instruments is, in Rosenfeld's terms, a temporary entity of some 36 women, the vast majority of whom had never, until they entered a rehearsal workshop 36 hours before the concert, before they touched a harp, violin, cello or guitar.

If that prospect conjures up a brief vision of the art-hype politics that drove Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra in the 60s, or even the spectacle of Fabienne Audouard and John Russell's work for 20 topless women playing the drums (and they were) at the South London Gallery in 2002, the reality is quite different. The half-hour work that Rosenfeld's electroacoustic orchestra delivered up was surprisingly tonal and percussive, its sounds merging well with the ambient hum — in G sharp, by the way, the orchestra tuned up to it — of the venue's massive Turbine Hall. The thrust of Rosenfeld's work comes less from the type of revolutionary theory of Cardew than a feminist impulse to create a body of women and make it audible. This is all done with some good humor: Rosenfeld is an old hand when it comes to orchestras. In 1994, she founded The Sheer Frost Orchestra for 17 women on guitars and nail varnish bottles, while, in 2003, she

Emotional Orchestra — which made its debut with a bunch of other musicians at the Manhattan gallery, Dutch Projects — are so named to highlight both the procedure behind their working method and to hint at hoary old chatmals about hysterical women and the like.

So, it was apt then, that Tate Modern's concert marked the debut of a series of gallery events organised by Héloïse, a catorium duo that focuses on women's work in sonic art. The real coup of the event was that it constituted what Rosenfeld considered the new phase of the orchestra. The players had learned their parts from following a huge graphic score that was projected on a video screen before them. There, superimposed on a picture of a haystack (answers on a postcard, please, as to the significance of this floral choice), were vertical lines. Wide shapes signified longer, slower bow movements, narrower shapes called for shorter, faster movements. As the players were not

stepping down strings on the necks of their instruments, this meant that the orchestra's sound was basically rhythmic, and this was enhanced by various other instructions on the score. For example, a 'b' signalled that players were to bowise the bow, an 'T' to patter the fingers on bridge and neck, and a 'w' to use the bow's wooden side. The more complex manoeuvres and solos were taken on by the more experienced players present.

With several of the orchestra members wearing glittery dresses, similar to those worn in fencing bouts, there was a strong visual sense of movement. And similarly so is the constantly changing information on the video screen. But in making her score minimalist, Rosenfeld's intentions go beyond that of the concert itself. By producing a statement about often unnecessary information, as well as creating a new relational system, there was something much more subversive suggested. □

## YAMATAKA EYE/BLIND BEAST OSAKA CLUB QUATTRO

JAPAN

BY JONATHAN DAVIES

At Osaka's seventh floor Club Quattro, where tremors and quakes have been known to cause damage to performances, any seismic activity was rendered inoffensive as members of Boredoms and Sons Youth powerfully commemorated Time Bomb Records' 15th anniversary. (In fact, this Osaka concert was the second of a two-city celebration; the first had taken place at Club Quattro's Tokyo space a couple of nights beforehand.)

First to the stage, Boredoms' Yamataka Eye, a dignitary of Osaka's Noize royalty focused on an inescapable power in the mid-distance, while for this event as Weyen, Eye knows how to build

anticipation. Enriching all traditional instruments, he used a pair of wheel controllers, resembling 100-watt bulbs, in conjunction with a rack of motion sensors to play out a single 20-minute burst of energy that constituted the most frenetic parts of Boredoms' Super AE album. Eye appeared with only these odds in his hands, then danced and aimed blows with a boxer's fury. His eritic solo set consisted of choreographed movement, electronically sensed and translated into an ever-changing palette of noise. At a particular moment, he would produce a shimmering bell-like a buzzing ring (inviting danger from the grating above) for dramatic punctuation.

At its climax, Eye's performance left a sense of suggestion couched with slow-burning bluster. Certainly, a tough act to follow, but a more than

capable outfit was on hand to assume the duty. Blind Beast, a nascent trio comprising Bondens' Yohemi P-We with Sons Youth's Jim O'Rourke and Thurston Moore, made a remarkably otherworldly journey. P-We shrilled pentatonic screams in a new language, played as array of small pipes and toms, hi-hats and cymbals; Moore provided guitar-driven feedback and siren; O'Rourke masterfully modulated everything — the caption of the vessel.

The two entranced the crowd with a set of elaborately twisting dances, augmented with Yohemi's uniquely levitic solo style. The density of Blind Beast's sound was but slowly and amplified until O'Rourke began subtly to unwind things, leaving huge beautiful spaces in the music; into which quartz chimes and articulated echoes began to appear. After this

floating comedown, Moore and P-We played feedback and percussion against each other, accelerating a return to intense strengtheners. A cash of melody during the final passage, unexpected and shocking, almost brought the journey to a crashing halt, but it was Moon's merciless assaults on his guitar that provided Blind Beast's salvation.

O'Rourke's most unlikely instrumental contribution was preceded by a roaring attendee, who was for some time blowing a harmonica (the antipathy of intent listeners), apparently aware that O'Rourke himself would finally produce his own model from a jacket pocket. His harmonica, played gently and with his had edges removed in the mix, provided the soft leading pads for Blind Beast's memorable arrival. □

## PAUL DUNMALL TRIO LONDON JACKSONS LANE

UK

BY PHYL CLARK

With saxophonist Paul Dunmall convalescing from the effects of a flesh infection and Paul Rogers' truly seven-string bass also recovering from a bashing, only drummer Tony Bianco made it to this gig without some evidence of physical trauma. Jacksons Lane has been housing increased music gigs since the start of 2005, if I mention that the venue sits only a few minutes' walk from Highbury tube on the Archway Road in North London, you'd be right to suspect that Sound 323's Mark Wasell is the promoter — and good on Wasell for presenting a trio the big on creativity, but short on opportunities to display it.

Because there are three musicians, a categorisation as a trio is inevitable, although some of the most revealing moments in the set defied standard three-way interplay. An epic drum solo allowed its way to the front, Rogers and Dunmall answered Bianco's final cymbal crash as a single utu with linear invention that demonstrated an elevated level of shared purpose and direction. Bianco is a splashy drummer, high on rhetorical gesture and the sort of loquacious grooves that are so fastidious they transform themselves into all-purpose verbiage. With equanimity perched on a wire, it felt like Dunmall and Rogers sometimes needed escape from Bianco's full-on insistence. Certainly it made for an intriguing imbalance within the group, honestly played out.

When saxophone and bass chose to ride Bianco's driving contours they did so with incisive physical conviction and instinctive resourcefulness. Dunmall — whose shoulder condition kept his number two instrument, a set of bagpipes, in this case — played tenor saxophone throughout and the warmth of his playing, both tonally and spiritually, was uplifting. The home straight of the trio's long improvisation marched towards with barnstorming drive, and Dunmall jarringly himself into an ecstatic groove, compactly executive of melodic hooks from South African jazz. He sent out-of-body screams up from the honing bowls of his instrument to beyond the beyond of the tenor saxophone. More playing was transmuted as Dunmall massaged noise itself.

The so-called 'VLL' bass that Paul Rogers uses is seafly curved like a violin and is essentially a bass extended to incorporate the upper range of the cello. It's a cliché to describe bass playing as 'wooky', but Rogers's tone has clarity that's closer to the party of water. With his seven-string instrument out of action, Rogers relied on his tenor saxophone, and his resonant and chameinic sound as bass, playing like I've never heard before. Sturmund pizzicato figures are given a flick of the wrist to turn them into muddy Notes-like string bends, a circular motion like a cascading drill bit creates feral clusters and heavy pressure bowing in the low register bounces thunderously. Dunmall let out an audible sigh when all was done, it was quite a journey. □



Clockwise from top left: Marisa Rosemehl's Emotional Orchestra; Björn Boëtius in Tokyo; Geodispol and Jason Forrest in Stavanger

## NUMUSIC FESTIVAL STAVANGER VARIOUS VENUES

NORWAY

BY SUSANNA GLASER

Björn Boëtius is Scandinavia's "largest festival dedicated to the advancement of electronic music". Numusic, held in the country's west coast town of Stavanger, sets its sights high. Now in its 15th year, the organisers achieved a major coup in securing Karlheinz Stockhausen for a three day live exposé of his electronic works, old and new. A mix of artists ranging from Norway's biggest electronic export Biophilia, to Bellini's lovelie Cobie Wilkes, left most festival-goers reeling with sensory overload on each of the five nights of entertainment.

Biophilia opened the festival at Stavanger's packed cathedral. With the rain drumming relentlessly outside and the wind peaking up to 100ft, the effect was blander than Gør Jerssen could ever have hoped for. The moody interior, initially lit up in muted blue (the lights would later be dimmed to complete darkness), was soakem as he set about laying loops of found sound. At times emotion was bypassed in favour of a meticulous rendition of his works, but the cathedral provided a stunning setting for Biophilia's hypnotic Ambient constructions.

Stockhausen's works were presented down the road from the man Iau Scene venue, at Skanem verkehus, where the hangar-like

interior was cordoned off by black curtains, encasing the audience inside a cocoon. Here Stockhausen introduced his works before reducing the lights to darkness, apart from a faint glowing "moon". The effect of this darkness was mesmerising. Time lost its meaning, ten minute pieces feeling just ten minutes. Pity then, that excruciatingly uncomfortable chairs prevented complete absorption into the music.

He Geisinger Der Abgleich from 1954 cannot have lost its impact in the intervening 50 years, its bubbles of boyish loquacities flying easily through the air above us. Meanwhile, a darker offering, featuring all the 1950s sci-fi film effects you've never heard, jaggedly peeling across our heads. Octophase was especially effective in the darkness, Stockhausen exhorting us to "enjoy the trip". Without visuals, the sound sculpted itself into the atmosphere, shimmering, eddying, swelling, nasing and sprouting, moving from speaker to speaker imperceptibly. By the fade out at the end, the silence was steadily passing on our eardrums.

The more recent work, Mitte des Gross ("Midway Greeting") from 1998, featured further explorations in his layering technique, cumulative chords changing tonality from harsh metallic noise to thick woolly sounds, sometimes feathered, or rounded, always mystic and surreal.

USA/US/US's flute and laptop combo was illuminating – Björn Boëtius's flute manipulated and mangled through effects while Jeff Carey added texture and flow to the performance. Hol's sonatas, used and abused. Vidéos went from breakin' dance squeak to quiet contemplation without a peddle. Tasse's hard-as-nails triple drums plus laptop broke the air around us with daggers of rhythm, while Germany's Ghettoblaster Ensemble entranced with eight yellow capped performers with purple ghettophones playing one part each of an abstract composition.

French-Japanese session series\_sights fascinated with music and visuals triggered by hand movements, conjuring art out of the air. Then there was the heavily bearded Geodispol – whistling throughout his set – whose utterly transfixing (and mind-blowing) musical contraptions and decidedly eccentric set-up, featuring a table filled with a range models of planets and a glass-cased metallic bird, had the whole audience rapt, not knowing whether to laugh or cry at the unconventional beauty of his astonishing performances.

Xploding Plastic also provided a rousing highlight. A live drummer and spontaneous digital outcry made for an explosion of sound beyond that expected of any Techno outfit, creating an atmosphere capable of bursting sunlit pathways as well as dance moves And

artists such as The N-Collective (big Band, smashing the sonic barrier by placing the audience in between two sets of bassist-loud performances and the gentle xylophone-led beauty of Matthias Engler's rendition of Keiji Sena's Six Japanese Games For Percussion And Electronics) further demonstrated the variety of music on offer. The outrageously drunk Cobie Wilkes, who, not content with imbibing whole bottles of wine on stage, decided to pour extra bottles over themselves, gained a mixed reaction, but their sex, surreal chaos was decidedly entertaining. The manic Jason Forrest/Donna Summer's show was a glorious headbanging mess. And a deliciously happy Jamie Lidell, dressed in a silver lame dressing gown, rocked out as much as the audience, who were dancing pore-close to his presence.

Being at once an intimate, close-knit festival, despite the calibre of international artists, the overwhelming impression here was one of warmth and of communication. Each of the artists was encouraged to get as close to the audience as possible and vice versa. Without the official divide between audience and performer, the artists thrived, while the audience couldn't help but feel themselves drawn into the music, whether presented by an artist they'd sought out or somebody they'd never heard of and, perhaps, chance upon in passing. □

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“Pulsing sub-bass audio suggests associations with the most primal anthropomorphic element in music – the rhythms of the human heart, with foetal and infant hypnagogic sense memories, seismic activity, the rumble of thunder (Jimi Hendrix claimed his earliest memory was of a thunderstorm) and even war. Disinformation’s National Grid is a sub-bass sound installation sourced either from the ambient VLF radio field induced by electricity pylons and mains circuits, or directly from the output cables of mains transformers.

National Grid offers live physical evidence of environmental electromagnetic pollution, a demonstration of the intrinsic musical properties of alternating current, beat-frequency effects and the architectural acoustics of its own exhibition space, a formula for the realisation and suppression of Futurist sound art, a cathartic response to the pressures of urban life, a monolithic soundtrack for the creative genius of electrification, and for the bitter conflicts between government and organised labour for control of the UK electrical infrastructure.”

Live electromagnetic sound installation  
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18 to 30 October 2005 {closed Mondays}

“Stargate”, “National Grid”, “Theophany” Ash 3.2 LP  
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South London Gallery

Her Noise catalogue:  
Contributors include Jan Avgikos / Christoph Cox /  
Drew Daniel / Anna Deruze / Louise Gray /  
Jutta Koether / Thurston Moore / Rob Young  
Published by Forma

↳ [www.hernoise.com](http://www.hernoise.com)  
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Thursday 10 November 7.30pm

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# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

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fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, [listings@thewire.co.uk](mailto:listings@thewire.co.uk). Compiled by Phil England



Rashed Tarai makes Atlantic Waves (left); Kalie Matthews makes Her Noise



## UK festivals

### ATLANTIC WAVES

LONDON

Annual Anglo-Portuguese festival comprising intriguing new collaborations across a wide variety of genres. Many of the artists can be sampled on the subscriber-only CD that comes with this issue of *The Wire*. Wriggins, Dead Combo with Jim Black, The Legendary Tiger Man vs Billy Jenkins (London Spitz, 23 November); The Gift, Fat Freddy, Ana do Siva (London Spitz, 24); Torne with Ambrósio Rodrigues, Simon Fisher Turner with Vitor Joaquim & Lu, Ale Orduña/Adasea SJ/Hugo Bauso (London The Spitz, 28); Sei Miguel Quartet with Joe Morris, Manu Mota/Ofekyung Lee/Joshie Kajiwara/Tim Barnes, Ernesto Rodrigues/Guthrie Ridgeway/Arghandar Daves/Masakuni Ezuji/Alessandro Betti (London Spitz, 29); Rafael Josep/Oren Marshall/César Russo, Magrada García/John Tilbury/Eddie Prevost/Barry Weisblat, Caetano Bechega/Johli Ländring (London Spitz, 30); London various venues various times and prices, 22-30 November; [www.atlanticwaves.org.uk](http://www.atlanticwaves.org.uk)

### HUDDERSFIELD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL

HUDDERSFIELD

Yokohama's hardsy hardcore contemporary music event celebrates its 30th birthday this year with Christopher Fox, Sveti Quartet, Iwao Enomoto, Janek Schaefer, James Dillon, Steersman Switserland/Sam Haynes, Michael Finnissy, Chris Dench, Helmut Lohrengel, Giorgio Scelsi, Jo Kondo and The Feeding Baroque Orchestra. Huddersfield various venues, times and prices, 17-27 November; 01484 430526, [www.hcfm.co.uk](http://www.hcfm.co.uk)

### LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

LONDON

This year's highlights include Italian Instabile Orchestra (Purcell Room, 12 November), McCoy Tyner Trio and World Saxophone Quartet (Barbican, 14), Bill Frisell and Tim Hart Trio (Barbican, 15), Big Air featuring Oren Marshall, Myra Melford and Jim Black (Purcell Room, 16), Urs Caine and John Surman (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 20), London various venues, times and prices, 11-20 November; [www.ljfs.org.uk](http://www.ljfs.org.uk)

### LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL AT THE SPITZ

LONDON

A clutch of interesting bills at this East End venue as part of the LF umbrella. Philip Clemons presents his film and music project Separated By Shadows plus Whutboz and Oren Marshall (11 November); Robotobok from Poland; Terry Edwards, Morten (12); Toob (a-rax Stepper), Søs Koch's Frikken Invenstoren, Iain Flitcroft (13); Norwegian gunstaf Gild Aarsæt, Mee Soup, Pohrlitz (15); Polar Bear, Gharmonic featuring Chiv Bell (18); jazz power trio Cuong Vu, Lucha Libre (19); Radio Radio, Zazie, David Rothberg's Why Birds Sing (20); London Spitz, 020 7392 0532, [www.pzit.co.uk](http://www.pzit.co.uk)

### LMC'S ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

LONDON

This year the improvisation-heavy festival takes the form of five evening concerts. Tickets are free but availability is strictly limited, so book in advance. Each night features a performance of a new work by Rhodri Davies and his ensemble Common Object. The full line up is: AMW with David Jackson, Ivan Seal, Louisa Martin, Common Object (1 November), Richard Charles/Goss/Gethin/Figari, Common Object (2), Steve Beresford, Iain Sawin, Deb 13, Common Object

(3), Xavier Charles, Louisa Martin, Teisha Mukarji, Common Object (4), John Tilbury, Maxen Kerbas, Merlin, Common Object (5). London Bedfellow Theatre, free, but reserve in advance by emailing [info@lmc-london.org.uk](mailto:info@lmc-london.org.uk)

### TERMITTE CLUB FESTIVAL

LEEDS

Long running Leeds Improv, free folk, out rock and noise festival over three nights. The full line up is: Rob Boddin, Sudden Intent, Selden B, Autocar 1.1, Gate 33 (Leeds Fenton, 24 November); Sharon Kraus & Alex K Redfearn and guests, Alan Yorkinson, Furasza, Endrice Curios Voice Duo (Leeds Fenton, 25); The Royal Bogger featuring Tom Janivison, Mick Beck and Paul Heaton plus Paul Dasmal, Stomberk Switzerland; Alessandro Bosetti, 5' MEG DM7 (Leeds Brudenell, 26); Leeds Fenton and Brudenell, 24-26 November, 7.30pm, [www.qsbt.co.uk/termitte](http://www.qsbt.co.uk/termitte)

### International festivals

#### AVANTO FESTIVAL

FINLAND

Live performances from Bla Bla Bangeld, Jöndekk, Bo, Avo Nots, Saaplaat, Soundspæder, Väriäinheit Lutut, Sudjen Infest, Häet, It's Not Fair, Tealide Hazard, Vinko Je Salmin, 3 Stenot and Paulikka Sävit. Plus a programme of different films, videos and installations. There is also for the first time, a strand of programming aimed specifically at children. Helsinki various venues, 18-20 November, £22 entry festival pass, [www.avantofestival.com](http://www.avantofestival.com)

#### NOVEMBER MUSIC

NETHERLANDS/BELGIUM/GERMANY

New music festival that takes place in three

countries and presents Maurizio Kagel, Carson Neeser, Zeitklang, Arto Lindsay, Andris Martin, Joaqi Polincia and many more. 16-Herentbosch, Gent, Bochum, Darmstadt, Essen and Hanover various venues, times and prices, 15-20 November, 00 31 73 6122000, [www.novembermusic.net](http://www.novembermusic.net)

### ROULETTE AT LOCATION ONE USA

A week of evening concerts by a range of leading experimental music practitioners. Daniel Carter & Mett Wilkes, MRA (7 November), Zef McMullen, MW Carter (8), Margarita Anitscher, Stefan Tcherepnin (9), Dovay Williams, Tony Buck (10), Julia Heyward (11), LaDonna Smith, John Basulto & Burkhard Beins (12) and Peter Evans, Eddie Goodman, Yutoprophone (13). New York Location One, 8.30pm, \$15-16, 001 212 219 8242, [www.roulett.org](http://www.roulett.org)

### TAMPERE JAZZ HAPPENING

FINLAND

International jazz festival with Ogreskes Black Acid, World Peace Orchestra, EST, Yohimbo Brothers, Carol Actis Dato Bass, Trevor Watts & Jamie James, Gebrard Ullmann's Basement Research Quintet, Peter Brezmann/Marino Paljasa/ Michael Wertsälä, KU, Amsterdam String Tho and Tenorist Stanislav Quartet, Tampere various venues, 3-8 November, 00 358 3 02071 66751, [www.tampere.fi/festivals/music](http://www.tampere.fi/festivals/music)

### TOTAL MUSIC MEETING

GE (FRANCE)

Celebrated improvisation festival with Ilio Wing Vene featuring Bertrand Phillips, Fert & Even Peter, Ong, John Butcher & Gino Roba, Mohammad Reza Mohrzaei, Wolfgang Fudny/Avi Domri/Thomas Lehrer/DJ Ilmbe, John Butcher/Lale Bilek/Fabrizio Spera and Waleda Leo Senth/Bans Phillips/Günter Sommer. There are also

workshops, a premiere of a documentary about Cecil Taylor entitled *All The Notes* and an audiovisual installation by LUST/LUGS Berlinische Galerie, 3-6 November, festival pass £20-80 euros, 00 49 30 7890 2600, [www.berlinischegalerie.de](http://www.berlinischegalerie.de), [www.berlin-music-production.de](http://www.berlin-music-production.de)

#### TWO MILLION TONGUES FESTIVAL, USA

Free folk, noise provocation, violin droops and fiddle guitar picking. Tony Conrad, Hototogisu, Minimotors, Mountains (3), Jackie-O Motherfucker, Paars & Brass, All the Rose (4), Whitehouse, Josephine Foster, Andrew Greenan, Heptic (5), Charlie Noting, Michael Chapman, No Neck Blues Band, Ed Asner (6), Chicago The Empty Bottle, 3-6 November, Spain, \$15-\$12, 001 773 276 3800, [www.emptybottle.com](http://www.emptybottle.com)

## Special events

### JUSTIN BENNETT: NOISE MAP

#### NETHERLANDS

Retrospective exhibition of works by sound artist Bennett. Contains include *Beaut Story*, which combines location recordings with local radio and slides; *Crystal Radio*, comprising a series of sound emitting glass bowls; *Soundhouse*, a sound sculpture which creates Interning posts from PVC tubing with funnels; and a new work which condenses the sounds of *Itineri* over a 24 hour period. The Hague Gem Museum (Box Achter de Kort, to 27 November, Tues-Sun, noon-8pm, 00 31 70 338 1133, [www.gem-online.com](http://www.gem-online.com)

### CHRONIC EPOCH

#### UK

A ten week exhibition celebrating the Beaconsfield exhibition and performance space's tenth anniversary, featuring artists they've worked with over the years including David Cunningham, Bruce Gilbert, Hayley Newman and Tracey Emin among others. The exhibition includes painting, film, performance and sculpture. London Beaconsfield, to 20

November, Wed-Sun, noon-8pm, 020 7582 6465, [www.beaconsfield.itd.uk](http://www.beaconsfield.itd.uk)

### FRICIES: RASTER-NOTON RESIDENCY

#### GERMANY

Carsten Nicolai presents installations at the SHAK museum for contemporary art and there is a series of performances featuring CM Von Hauswirth and Serling (11 November); Frank Witschinski aka Karmel, Systone, Alva Noto, Sigur (12); Robert Lippok, Paul, Bfr aka srd, COH (23), Ghent Vorourt and SWM, 11-25 November, 00 32 9267 2889, [www.vorourt.be](http://www.vorourt.be)

### HER NOISE

#### UK

Exhibition put together by Electra, the production house run by The Wire's Anne Hilde Nestet and Line Duwezwerf Russell, which features new soundworks and interactive installations by Ben Gorst and Jutta Koether, Emma Reddish, Christina Kubasch, Koffie Mattheus, Hayley Newman and Marina Rosenfeld. London South London Gallery, 18 November-18 December, Tues-Sun, noon-6pm, 020 7703 9799, [www.electra.org.uk](http://www.electra.org.uk), [www.soundsoundgalleryst.com](http://www.soundsoundgalleryst.com)

### RYOJI IKEDA & HIROSHI SUGIMOTO: THE END OF TIME

#### JAPAN

Ikeda creates a sound installation to accompany a series of seascapes as part of a major retrospective of work by Japanese photographer, Hiroshi Sugimoto. Tokyo Mori Art Museum, to 9 January, [www.mori-artmuseum.jp](http://www.mori-artmuseum.jp)

### CHARLES LINENHAM COMPANY: NEW QUARTET/HAPPY DAYS

#### UK

Two dance pieces by the acclaimed UK choreographer as part of this year's Dance Umbrella programme. *Happy Days* is inspired by and uses as its soundtrack Jim O'Rourke's piece of the same name, a minimalist drone work for guitar and steady gurdy. London The Place Robin Howard Dance Theatre, 6-8 November, 8pm, £15-£5, 020 7387 0031, [www.danceumbrella.co.uk](http://www.danceumbrella.co.uk)

### PLAYING JOHN CAGE

#### UK

An exhibition of new installations focusing on the legacy of John Cage, put together by David Rop. Featured artists include Kaffe Matthews, Alvin Curran, Michael Penne, Alco Suzuki, Rolf Julius, Carsten Nicolai, Takagi Naotsukuro and Ryoko Heda. One of Cage's *Ryoanji* drawings will be on display and there will also be four new audio realisations of test pieces by Gavan Rogers, Christian Wolff, Michael Parsons and Meiko Shiomi that can be accessed on shuffle play. The main exhibition is partnered by a second exhibition that runs simultaneously upstairs, and which focuses on the Black Mountain College and the artists that were regulars there, including Robert Rauschenberg, Willem de Kooning and Buckminster Fuller. Sefton Art Society, 5 November-15 January 2006, Mon-Sun, 10am-8pm, free, 0117 917 2300, [www.smfr.org.uk](http://www.smfr.org.uk)

### SAVAGE PENCIL: ARTFANG

#### UK

The Manc's long-serving cartoonist and illustrator exhibits original works and prints. His distinctive style uses 'Black Metal' gothic script, serif, bold and ink as both media and inspiration. London Inbetween, to 1 November, Mon-Sat, 10-30am-6-8pm; Sunday noon-5pm, free, 020 7229 8010, [www.inbetween.uk/art.htm](http://www.inbetween.uk/art.htm)

### SOUNDS LIKE DRAWING

#### UK

Exhibition exploring the link between sound and drawing in works by Kaffe Matthews, Carsten Nicolai, Steve Rodes, Beth Campbell and Connor Kelly, and others. London Drawing Room, to 20 November, Thurs-Sun, noon-8pm, 020 7729 5333, [www.drawingroom.org.uk](http://www.drawingroom.org.uk)

### SYNAESTHESIA: MODERN MUSICHEDIA

#### UK

Crossmedia happening involving performance, film and music from the polyethnic Improbable, Bay Area collective The Why Because, Inc. app. (ext.), which includes a rare live appearance by Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton plus

members of Shilluppipe and The Helen Scarsdale Agency, visual artist Galena, and gender-bending cabaret from Troops. Oakland CA 21 Grand Gallery, 6 November, [www.21grand.org](http://www.21grand.org)

### WEATHER GUITAR

#### UK

A new sound installation by Simon Blackmore where a nylon string flamenco acoustic guitar is attached to an elaborate construction allowing it to be played by changes in the wind speed and direction, and changes in light conditions. Birmingham Iron Gallery, to 13 November, Tues-Sun, 11am-6pm, free, 0121 248 0798, [www.iron-gallery.co.uk](http://www.iron-gallery.co.uk)

## On stage

### A HAWK & A HACKSAW

Alythistic multi-instrumentalist Jeremy Barnes on the road. Dublin Whelans (25 October), London Bush Hall (27), Bristol Trinity Arts Centre (28), Leeds Holy Trinity Church (31), Edinburgh Subway Concerts (1 November), Aberdeen Tunnels (2), Glasgow The (3), Hull Adelphi (4), Manchester Kings Arms (6), Shoreditch (6), Nottingham Castle (7), London Spitz (8), Chelmsford (10), Liverpool Vaux View (10), Newcastle Wonder (12), Nottingham Cabaret (13), Coventry The Angel (14), Cambridge Portland Arms (15), Brighton Ballroom (16), [www.bearheartband.co.uk/hawk](http://www.bearheartband.co.uk/hawk)

### AKRON/FAMILY

Young Gods Records combo combining alt-folk with extended skank Improv. London 93 Feet East (15 November), Conflict Buffalo Bar (16), Bristol Cube Cinema (17), [www.younggodsrecords.com](http://www.younggodsrecords.com)

### ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS

Memory Music Puzzlement tour with their dramatic vocal stylings. Molehampton Civic Hall (22 November), York Open House (23), Dublin Vicar Street (25), Glasgow Assembly (30), Bristol Academy (2 December), Camber Sands All Tomorrow's Parties (4), London Shepherds Bush Empire (5 & 6), [www.antonycandthejohnsons.com](http://www.antonycandthejohnsons.com)

# Trip Or Squeek



# Out There



The Young Gods (left) and Four Tet on tour

## BIG AIR

Steve Buckley and Chris Batchelor's jazz quartet with Myra Melford, Sean Marshall and Jim Black. London Jazz Festival (16 November), Leeds Wardrobe (17), Cambridge (18).

## PHILIP CLARK: ALL THE RAGE

UK

A concert exploring themes of text and music, featuring the premiers of *All The Rage* by composer and *Wire* contributor Philip Clark. The programme includes pieces by Hans Eisler, Mike Westbrook and Richard Barrett, played by Ian Pace (piano), Carl Rosman (clarinet), Alex Ward (clarinet, guitar) and Kate Westbrook (voice). London The Warehouse, 10 November, 7.30pm, £10-£7. [www.lbmco.co.uk](http://www.lbmco.co.uk)

## PHILIP CLEMOS'S SEPARATED BY SHADOWS

Film and live music collaboration with a first disc band featuring *The Wire's* own Clive Bell, John Edwards, Tom Chant, Mark Sanders and Pete Locker. Manchester Life Café (5 November), London The Spitz (11), Exeter Phoenix (13), Norwich Arts Centre (14). [www.philclemo.com](http://www.philclemo.com)

## RHODRI QUIVES

Music for solo harp by Pauline Oliveros, Cornelius Castor, Michael Parsons, Tim Parkinson, Catherine Kurtz, John Luty, Lawrence Crane and David Smith. London Church of St Anne & St Agnes, 23 November, 7.30pm, £9, £8. [www.rhodriquives.co.uk](http://www.rhodriquives.co.uk)

## FAUST

Aberdeen has been added to this mini-tour by the Krautrock auteur. Sanger Hendre Hall (27 October), Aberdeen The Tunnels (28), Castle Court Exchange (31). [www.arkt.net](http://www.arkt.net), [www.errestode.com](http://www.errestode.com)

## FOUR TET

Kenan Hebban takes his kaleidoscopic soundscapes on the road supported by Explosions In The Sky (26 October 19 November) and Koala (10-15 November). Hastings (22 October), Cambridge Soho Tee (23), Easter Couriers Club (26), Cardiff Point (27), Bristol Trinity Arts Centre (28), Oxford Zodiak (29), Reading South Street (30), Sheffield Plaza (31), Manchester Mint Lounge (1 November), Leeds Brudenell Club (2), Gaiety Stage (3), Edinburgh Liquid Rooms (4), Glasgow ABC (5), Brighton Concourse 2 (7), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (8), Wrexham Central Station (9), London Hammersmith Palais (10), Dublin Temple Bar (12), Belfast Spring & Assembly (13), Galway Rosin O'ubh (14), Cork City Hall (15). [www.fourtet.net](http://www.fourtet.net), [www.eatyourtowns.com](http://www.eatyourtowns.com)

## BILL FRISSELL

New York guitarist plays two dates. Edinburgh Usher Hall (31 October), London Barbican (15 November). [www.homecds-uk.com](http://www.homecds-uk.com)

## FURSAXA

Sublime, ethereal folk from West Philly. Cambridge CB2, 28 November, £6-£5, 01223 300087, [www.harvest-tape-recordings.com](http://www.harvest-tape-recordings.com)

## HOLLY GOLIGHTLY

Good rocking ex-Hendicote twangs her way around the country. York Barfly (3 November), Liverpool Sun (4), Glasgow Barfly (5), Cardiff Barfly (11), London Barfly (12).

## GRUTRONIC

Improving ensemble and guests. London Spitz with Clive Bell (18 November), Tivaghmouth Carlson with Even Parker (20).

## ARVE HENRIKSEN

Debut UK performance for Norwegian trumpeter's trio with Asbjørn Kvern and Jarl Bang. Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall, 29 November, 8pm £15-£9, 023 8069 5151, [www.tamses.co.uk](http://www.tamses.co.uk)

## ITALIAN INSTABLE ORCHESTRA

The Italian jazz big band celebrate their 15th anniversary with a Contemporary Music Network tour. The group joined by Leeds based composer and pianist Matthew Bourne for a specially commissioned collaboration. Leeds Wardrobe (7 November), Basinstoke Amfil (9), Manchester RNCM (10), Oxford Wesley Memorial Church (11), London Purcell Room (12). [www.montours.org.uk](http://www.montours.org.uk), [www.instableorchestra.com](http://www.instableorchestra.com)

## JAMIE LIOELLI

Cyber-soul singer from the recent *Wire* cover star. London Solo with Genesee and Mocky (2 November), Sheffield Plug (3), Gateshead Sage (4), Liverpool Masque Theatre (5), Brighton Concourse 2 with Jackson And His Computer Band (6). [www.wirerecords.com](http://www.wirerecords.com)

## LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monday concert by an all-star improvising big band combining conductors, improvisations and new compositions. London Red Rose Club, 6 November, 8pm £5-£3, 020 7732 0222

## OREN MARSHALL

Solo and collaborative gigs from the tube and electronics whiz (see page 18). London Scale solo supporting Patrick Wolf (31 October), London Spitz solo (31 November), Brighton Jazz Club duo with Julian Nicholas (16 December), London Spitz in a trio with Rafael Teal and César Barone (30). [www.slowfeet.co.uk](http://www.slowfeet.co.uk)

## STEPHAN MATHIEU & MAXE SCHAEFER

Collaboration between the electroacoustic composer and the triple-arm turntable exponent using recordings of John Faverman's collection of classical and exotic instruments as their starting point. York University Rymer Auditorium, 11 November, 7.30pm, £8-£3, 01904 432439, [www.electrolysis.ac.uk](http://www.electrolysis.ac.uk)

## MELT BANANA

Funhouse punk rock from Tokyo. Brighton Pavilion (8 November), Bristol Rave & Finkin with Justice Yeldham and Hunting Lodge (8), Birmingham Medicine Bar (9), London Garage (10).

Manchester Academy 3 (11), Glasgow O2a Mar (12), Sloane On-Tops Georgian Theatre (13), Nottingham University (14), Cardiff Club For Bach (15), Leeds Josephs Well (16), Hull Adelphi (19), London Garage (20), Southampton Jenes with Hunting Lodge and Big Joint (21). [www.electrolysis.org](http://www.electrolysis.org)

## OVERKILL

All nighter put together by Wrong Music, Littlebig and Adiast and featuring O/Rupture, Justice Yeldham, Oi! Scotch Egg, Shrimps, VVM, Mississ, Cel, Trencher, Phil Collins 3, Ol' Floor Cleaner and The Powerfood Posse among many others. London Deafnesses II, 4 November, 10pm-6am, £10-£12, [www.wrongmusic.com](http://www.wrongmusic.com)

## PG SIX + SAMARA LUBELSKI + LEAP SECONOS

Free folk first-timer Pat Gubler supported by New York underground compatriot Lubelski and three-drums and bass duo from South London, Lewisham Underbelly, 14 November, 8pm, £6, 077922 31122, [www.pgsixlondon.co.uk](http://www.pgsixlondon.co.uk)

## PLAYING JOHN CAE

To launch the exhibition of the same name (see Special Events) there's an afternoon concert featuring Kells Matthews, Alvin Curia, Michael Prime and Alce Susuki performing their own work, and Philip Thomas and Anton Lukashevich performing work by Cage, Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, Eric Sasse and Alvin Lucier. Bristol Arnolfini, 5 November, 3pm, 0117 917 2300, [www.arnolfini.org.uk](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

## POLAR BEAR

Drummer Seb Rochford's no-jazz ensemble Colchester Arts Centre (6 November), Gaineshead Sage (8), Leeds Wardrobe (9), Cardiff Café Jazz (10).

## THE STEVE REID ENSEMBLE

Jazz drummer on tour. The London concert is a collaboration with Four Tet's Kenan Hebban, Cardiff Point (14), Brighton Union (15).

Birmingham Custard Factory (16), Bristol Riddlers (17), Manchester Music Box (18), Leeds Hi-Fi Club (19), London Luminaire with Kenan Hebban/Four Tet (21). [www.soulsjamsmeets.co.uk](http://www.soulsjamsmeets.co.uk)

## PAUL RUTHERFORD

Solo three-armed improvisations with support from *Psychotic Challenge*. Performances will be accompanied by live action painting by Peter Oakley and Greg Fuller. Warrington Pyramid Arts Centre, 18 November, 7.30pm, £8, 01925 442345, [www.pyramid.org.uk](http://www.pyramid.org.uk), [www.electronicmusic.co.uk](http://www.electronicmusic.co.uk)

## SCANNER & PETE LOCKETT

A new percussive and electronics collaboration also going under the name *The Parallax Boat Brothers*. Nottingham Arts Theatre (28 October), Didcot Jacqueline Du Pré Music Building (2 November), Brighton Dome (3), Bath Spa University Centre, Michael Tippett Centre (4), Exeter Phoenix (5), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (6).

## SLEATER-KINNEY

Portland, Oregon rock trio on fine form and on tour. Brighton Concourse 2 (8), Bristol Fleeces (9), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (10), Glasgow Gran Môr (11), Leeds Cockpit (12). [www.sleater-kinney.com](http://www.sleater-kinney.com), [www.ticketst.com](http://www.ticketst.com)

## TAURIPS TULA

Impressed puni-psychadelic guitar music featuring Heather Leigh Murray and The Wine's David Keenan, supported by Cambridge's Hoot. Cambridge CB2, 7 November, 8pm, £5-£4, 01223 300087.

## ASSIF TSAHAR

Rare UK date for the US avant jazz saxophonist. Manchester Beeth House, 3 November, 8.30pm, £3, 07888 888705, [www.assiftsahar.com](http://www.assiftsahar.com)

## UNORTHODOX CHANTS

Contemporary Music Network tour featuring music from Russia that drew on traditional folk forms. The Polovtsian Vocal Ensemble perform traditional wedding songs alongside work by Stevinsky and a more minimalist work by Vladimir Martynov performed with the string ensemble Opus Posti. Vocalist and accordionist Evelyn Palmer comprises the trio. Hailfield Lawrence Hall (23 November), London LSD St Luke's (28), Manchester RNCM (26), Brighton Old Market (29), Basingstoke Amfil (30). [www.unorthodox.org](http://www.unorthodox.org)

## JUSTICE YEHOLAM

Australian sound and performance artist on tour

with his glass, salve and blood show. London Electroworks II as part of the Overall all-nighter (see above) (4 November), Bristol Cube with Matt Banana & Noisage (8), Colchester Arts Centre with indiebandcamp (10), London Barbers Bar (11), Brighton the (13), Leeds Peacockhouse with Fluffy Tard and others (14), Nottingham the (15), Edinburgh the (16). [dualplayer.com/justice.htm](http://dualplayer.com/justice.htm)

#### THE YOUNG GODS

Celebrating the release of their 20th anniversary retrospective on PIAS, London Barfy (25 November), Birmingham Barfy (26), York Fiddlers (27), Glasgow Barfy (28), Dublin Temple Bar Music Centre (30), Liverpool Barfy (1 December), Cardiff Barfy (2), London Barfy (3). [www.younggods.com](http://www.younggods.com), [www.bareyab.com](http://www.bareyab.com)

#### ZAUM

Steve Hines' improving group announce the release of their new album *The Little Flash of Letting Go* with a handful of live dates Poole Lighthouse (12), London Spitz (20), Brighton Pavilion Theatre (24).

## Club spaces

### BACK ON THE TOWN

A mostly improved music evening organised by Spring Head Jack's Ashley Wales. This month features a large acoustic ensemble playing improvisations and compositions conducted by Wales. The group features Terry Bevan, Osby Robinson, Stefano Tedesco, Peter Reed, Mark Wastell, Angharad Davies, her Kaffin, Hannah Marshall, Marco Mottos, Roan Weston, George Fisher, David Leahy, Nick Smart and Ian R. Wilson. London Red Rose, 17 November, 8:30-11pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

#### BOAT-TING

Monthly Improv and poetry night on a boat, based on the Themes with Roger Turner/Alex Wood/Pat Thomas. Because featuring Gary Jeff and Lou Cicalotti, female rock the Wet Dog; and poet Dr Monty London Yacht Club, 7 November, Bogn, £5-£2.50, [www.boat-ting.com](http://www.boat-ting.com)

## BRISTOL CUBE MICROPLEX

Music events at the West Country's counter-cultural enclave this month include *Dante's Inferno*, plus a screening of *The Keep* in Time beats and decks documentary (4 November), New York free talk from PG Six (13), *Aeon*, *Wenley* and *Picasso* (13), live music and readings from Arthur Brett (18), Charles Hayward and Zev (25), Bristol Cube Cinema, various times & places, 0117 907 4190, [www.cubebeams.com](http://www.cubebeams.com)

#### CYRK

A mixed bill of extreme performance and improvisation with Justice Yekhan, SKADA featuring Mattin & Eddie Prévost, Lycanbre, [grrrr.computer.co.uk](http://grrrr.computer.co.uk) (10), murmer, plus guest: Dale Chisholm, Paul Collins and Richard Thomas. London Barbers Bar, 11 November, 7:30pm-1am, £3, 07767 428415

#### FREE RADICALS

Improvisation night with Roland Reissman Quartet, Dominic Raith, Rebello & Stuckey (2 November) and The Residents with special guests David Toop and Rhodri Davies (8). London Red Rose Club, 8pm, £5/£3, 07778 363492, [grrrr.computer.co.uk](http://grrrr.computer.co.uk)

#### INTUITIVE MUSIC EVENTS

Three solo performances on string instruments: *Violintronica* from Canada, *Cellophane* from USA and *Jazz* on guitar, cello, zebra and shemshen. Hull Adelphi Club, 6 November, 8pm, £25, 01482 348 216

#### KLINKER QALSTON

Improvisation music and off the wall performance club with *Klinker Film Night* (1 November), The Targets (4), *Klinker Writing Group* with Sibyl Masigal (book in advance at 020 8670 5049; 8:30pm start); *It's the Bay Parties*, a trumpet trio of Jim Deneck, Frank Cherbon and Paul Shearman (11); *Hypnotic* and *Benton Williams* (15); *Klinker Film Night* with special guest (18); *Hilary Jeffery & Alfredo Geneser* (22); *The Small Fossils* featuring Robin Masgove, Amy Bird & Hig Maccato, *Companion Set*, Harry Stott & Archie Medes and *Bob Flag* (25); *Hog Calling* featuring Sue

Lynch, Sarah Moore, John Edwards, Steve Noble, David Jago and Adrian Northover (29) London, Sussex, Tuesdays and Fridays, 9pm, £5/£3, 020 8806 2100, [www.klinkerclub.info](http://www.klinkerclub.info)

#### KLINKER NUNHEAD

Improvised music and off the wall performance club with artists to be (3 November), *Remote Viewers* featuring David Potts, Adrian Northover and Caroline Kraabel, *Suspensions* featuring Kettman, Simon King, Chris Corriveau, Paul May (10); *Tuck Off* Brian (17); *the (24)*. London Hy House, Thursdays, 8:30pm, £5/£3, 07971 699 699, [www.klinkerclub.info](http://www.klinkerclub.info)

#### OXFORD IMPROVISERS

Improv amid the deerstalking spires. *Bruma* *Gastello & Cate Reason* (Oxford) *Port Mahon*, 2 November; *Pat Thomas/Alex Word/Roger Turner* (Oxford Brooks University Headington Hill Drama Studio, 6); *Oxford Improvisers Orchestra* present *Assassion* by Malcolm Atkins (Oxford Jockey Club de Pre Concert Hall, 17). [www.oxmo.studio282.com](http://www.oxmo.studio282.com)

#### RATIONAL RECORDS

New monthly inter-art social occasion. Tonight features Andrew Sperring presenting three new works for clarinet and electronics, *laptop music duo* *ButterflyCut*, and the opportunity to perform karaoke versions of songs by Nina Hagen, Karl Weill, Laure Anderson or Nine Inch Nails. London Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, 1 November, and every first Tuesday of the month, 7pm, £5, 07855 486311, [www.rationalrecords.org.uk](http://www.rationalrecords.org.uk)

#### SPIRIT OF GRAVITY

Live electronic and experimental music from Casplock, Melwach and Astran, Brighton Marlowe Theatre, 22 November, 8:30pm, £4/£3, 07782 218 621, [www.spiritofgravity.co.uk](http://www.spiritofgravity.co.uk)

#### SPRAWL

Small bullet of the performances of electronic music features *Shriggley artif* and *Hawesien* guitarist Mike Cooper; *astologue* synth music from Slovenia's *Otxo*, Swiss electronic musician AM/PW; plus *DJ Jonathan* from *Soul Jazz*.

London Charterhouse Bar Upstairs, 9 November, 7:30pm, £4/£3, 020 7606 0858, [www.sprawl.org.uk](http://www.sprawl.org.uk)

#### WACKA: A FETE WORSE THAN DEATH

"Composers of comedy and electronic music" featuring *Wren Standen*, *Simon Munnelly*, *Adverse*, *Cember's Interactive Sausage Salam* and the *Wacko DJ Assault Squad*. London Spitz, 4 November, 8pm-1am, 020 7392 9032, [www.wacko-it.com](http://www.wacko-it.com)

## Incoming

### MEM

**SPAIN** Annual festival in the Basque country including dance, theatre, environmental art, video, film, net art, performance, readings and masterclasses. Artists include David Thomas & *Ne Palie Bay*, FE-MAI, Fred Begot & *Carrie Shaw* and *Derren Brown*. 8-16 various venues, times and prices, 12-30 December, 00 39 650 939 676, [www.musicalactiona.com](http://www.musicalactiona.com)

#### NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

**UK** All Tomorrow's Parties winter event with a line-up selected by Mark Walla's Arts Icons Lydia Lunch, Antony And The Johnsons, Acid Mothers Temple, Diamond Galas, Cinematic Orchestra, Cerro Susuki & Jelly Planet, High On Fire, Coco Rose, Bassie, Holger Czukay, The Kills, Blonde Redhead, Jaga Jazzist, Weezer, The Fucking Champs, Les Savy Fav, Michael Rother, Battles, Quinton & Miss Pease, *The Locust*, *Year Future*, 400 Blows, Subrize, The Hills, *Les Savy Fav*, Hell, Gira, Gina, Alai-Saint, The Elements, Orgon, Sean Williams, Radio Vega, Deafheaven, Matador and *Hi-Fi Me Tomorrow*. Carter, Santa's Holiday Camp, 2-4 December, [www.apfestival.com](http://www.apfestival.com)

**Out There** Items for inclusion in the December issue should reach us by Friday 21 October

# UK Radio

### RESONANCE 104.4 FM

NB Resonance has undergone major retooling as of October 2008. The station broadcasts across Central London 6am-11pm, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times. CD-quality Web streaming and full listings at [www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com)

### ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Thursday 9:30pm. Presented by The Wire's *Watt*

#### BALLING THE JACK

Tuesday 12 noon, Blues with *Jon Cuthby*

#### BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Thursday midnight. Presented by Howard Jacobs

#### BLACK FRIDAY

Friday 10:30pm, Death Metal

#### CLEAR SPOT

Wednesday 7am. Open access slot

#### NOSTALGIE YA MBOKA

Saturday 1:30pm

#### FAR SIDE RADIO

Wednesday 12 noon. With Paul Fisher

### FIFTY-FIFTY SOUND SYSTEM

Tuesday 11:30pm, GM 3405 studio 8, *biggie*

#### THE GLASS SHRIMP

Wednesday 5pm. Late sessions

#### KOSMICHE

Tuesday 10:30pm. With the *Kleinreich* DJs

#### MINING FOR GOLD

Thursday 11pm. With *Johny Brown*

#### MUSA LUSA

Monday 3:30pm, Portuguese new music

#### ONKYOODO

Monday 9:30pm. Japanese new music

#### OST

Saturday 4:30pm. Soundtracks with *Johnny Frank*

#### LATE TO LUNCH WITH OUT TO LUNCH

Wednesday 2pm. With Ben Nelson

#### REAL TIME

Thursday noon. With *Simon Russell*

#### RED ZERO RADIO

Saturday 11pm. Noise

### RHYTHM INCURSIONS

Saturday 9:30pm, *rumahrumah*

#### SOLID STEEL

Wednesday 11pm. With *Coldcut*

#### \_SOUND PROJECTING

Friday 8:30pm. With *Alas* present

#### THE TRADITIONAL MUSIC HOUR

Thursday 2am. With *Heg Hall*

#### UNST

Saturday 3:30am. Art radio with *Seth Cohen*

#### BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

#### GILLES PETERSON WORLDWIDE

Sunday 11pm 1am. Grooves from all over the shop

#### BBC RADIO 3 9-93 FM

#### LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight.

New Music

#### JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

#### HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11pm-1am

New Music magazine

#### MIXING IT

Friday 10:15-11:30pm

Hyper-edited mix of avant sounds

#### BBC LANCASHIRE

9:55/5/10:39/10:45 FM, 855 MV

#### ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight. The Wire's dub column. Steve Barker mixes it up with style

#### BBC MERSEYSEASIDE

9:58 FM, 14:55 MW

#### IPMS

Sunday midnight-2am. Avant sounds mixed

#### CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM (MILTON KEYNES)

#### GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-11:30pm. Eccentric avant-mix

#### XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)

#### FLO-MOTION

Sunday 10am-midnight. Leftfield electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website, [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)

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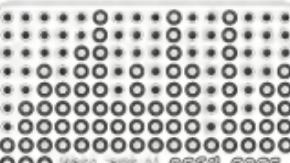
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Koto virtuoso, Keiko Nosaka

## David Toop finds new ways of listening in the silences of shakuhachi master Watazumi, composer Minoru Miki and koto player Keiko Nosaka

In September I lectured in Gaejeon, at KAIST, the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. During questions after my talk, I spoke a little about my passion for Korean traditional music, notably *apgeung sanjo*, *komango*, *p'ansori* opera, Buddhist *pomp'ae* chanting, *hyangak* court music and Confucian *aak*. One of the institute's lecturers challenged me. At first she assumed that I had discovered this music during my trip and so was expressing the innocent enthusiasm of a somnambiotic tourist. I explained that I had been listening to Korean recordings and attending concerts for more than 35 years, and what I continue to find endlessly stimulating is the astringent timbres (an audio equivalent of the pungent, spicy kimchee served at every Korean meal), tempi that teeter on the brink of immobility, volatile improvising, and what John Cage called "Korean time", a mixture of precise, concussive simultaneous hits, or shrilled, fractionally delayed accents spread across ensembles of wind, percussion and string. It's hard to think of any other body of music in which silences gather energy in the same way, as if the momentum of playing is driven by withholding, rather than pushing outwards.

We discussed these silences, non-silences a bit, but what I couldn't do, she concluded (couldn't in the sense of not being in a position to do so, rather than shouldn't), was critique Korean traditional music for its suspension in a period of pre-modern history. For her, this was an art form that had failed to adapt to contemporary conditions and so exists only as a museum piece. Given the turbulent, repressed history of Korea in the 20th century, this seems hardly surprising. Traditional music had little opportunity to evolve under Japanese colonial occupation, followed by civil war and military dictatorship.

I might agree with her, but the awareness of this alleged fossilisation affects me in a relatively dispassionate form, since I began listening to records, initially those released by the late, great recordist John Levy, rather than growing up with some sense that the music was part of my immediate cultural legacy. For me, there was no unpleasant weight of history, no aura of old people and defunct institutions, no unwelcome associations with an imposed exoticism.

Despite the vigorous modernising efforts of composer-performers such as Hwang Byung-ki and Jin Hi Kim, or Kim Duk-Soo's shamanistic fusions, along with the inevitable kitch of "Greensleeves" interpreted on the kayagum, traditional repertoire apparently has little to do with South Korea's ascendancy in the field of edge technologies, IT infrastructure and violent revenge movies.

Or does it? This is a phenomenon that fascinates outsiders – a country in which it's possible to buy 16 gigabyte flash memory, then go and eat toru-like muk jelly blocks made from acorns – but it also raises the contradiction between adhering to modernist ideals of change yet retaining deeply inspirational feelings for frozen traditions. Musicians who pass under the radar of the academy, and I would guess this is true of younger Korean players such as percussionist Park Je Chun, may be finding new ways to approach dilemmas of identity and practice, having found themselves isolated from both the international so-called community and the mainstream cultural life of their own country.

The discussion at KAIST made me think again about conservatism. This is an aspect of music making that few people wish to discuss. Conservatism is either good or bad, and that's it: for neo-conservative music critics, conservatism is the future; for experimentalists and free rebels, it's in the past. If I'm listening for more than 35 years to music that developed within the court of a Korean king in the 12th century, then conservatism seems an inadequate word to describe the ossification of that experience. On the other hand, the music springs out at me like a series of controlled explosions. Nothing is familiar, except in my elusive memories of the sound. After all this time, in the hearing, I still make discoveries.

At around the same time I encountered Korean music, in the early 1970s, I was given a cassette tape by a Japanese artist named Toshio Seki. On one side of the tape was music by the shakuhachi player Watazumi; on the other side was a collection of pieces for 20 string koto, composed by Minoru Miki and performed with breathtaking virtuosity and subtlety by Keiko Nosaka. Perhaps it's too strong to describe

this moment as an epiphany, but I was affected profoundly. The articulation of silence was revelatory, particularly in Watazumi's slow pieces and in Miki's *Tenyo*, but maybe what pulled me up even more sharply was a realisation that experimentation existed outside of the avant garde.

On the surface, perhaps this wasn't so different from the approach of British experimental composers such as Howard Skempton, Iain Hume-Carter, Michael Parsons, Gavin Bryars and Cornelius Cardew. Once the post-Cage, post-Fuxus air had cleared, all of them, in very different ways, were looking for meaningful ways to engage with tonality, which is another way of saying that they were looking for meaningful ways to engage with a particular history.

The difference lay in the origins of this strategy. For the British experimental music composers (and Christian Wolff in the US), their encounters with tonality and tradition were determined by a desire to communicate beyond the limited possibilities of the avant garde context. For Minoru Miki the desire to communicate seems to have been conditioned by a rejection of modernism, a more direct desire for simplicity. Koto pieces such as *A Young Sproat* and *Hansyogi* by Miki are disarmingly lyrical, though heard in the context of Nagisa Oshima's *Empire Of The Senses*, with its graphic sex, cruelty and violence, their attractiveness emphasises the film's themes of desire and possession and so add another layer to this difficult issue of memory, history, conservatism and progression.

What I question now is not so much whether it's decadent, reactionary or critically indulgent to be listening to Minoru Miki's rather pretty koto pieces, or 12th century Confucian music from Korea, but why music in general has become quite boring. The institution of music – all music – is more conservative than any individual examples. Hearing sound, or finding new contexts in which to play music, is what seems more interesting than any argument about certain musics being right or wrong, conservative or progressive. I don't have a theory to resolve any of these thoughts; simply the desire to maintain an open way of listening. □

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